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editorial

'Tis the Season...

Gift ideas for the end of the world

This is our last issue of 2012, and as we go to press, two dates loom in the *FT* calendar. One, of course, is Christmas – the day on which you will be presenting loved ones, friends and family with copies of the latest volume in our ongoing *It Happened to Me!* book series (see p58 for details of how to get your mitts on this most fortean of gifts). *FT's* resident cartoonist, the great Hunt Emerson, also has some ideas on how to fill this year's Christmas stockings. His long-awaited adaptation, with Kevin Jackson, of *Dante's Inferno* is now available. You can purchase what Hunt (with no hyperbole whatsoever) describes as "my best book to date!" over at http://largecow.com, along with all sorts of other goodies.

Yes, the Season of Good Will has been underway for some weeks now and we have already witnessed its first Father Christmas calamity. Shoppers in Reading's Broad Street Mall were treated to the sight of an abseiling Santa being left dangling 20 feet above the crowd after his long white beard became tangled in the ropes. After hanging around mid-air for some 40 minutes, Santa (aka Steve Chessel) was finally rescued by one of his colleagues from the 11th Battalion Royal Engineers. His ordeal over, the unfortunate Mr Chessel was praised for not breaking character: "He could have just taken his beard off and let himself down but he was such a professional and he didn't want to let the children down," said the shopping centre's marketing manager (*Daily Mail, 20 Nov 2012*).

It's not the first (and probably not the last) time that Santa's attempts to move with the times have ended in disaster and much hilarity. Last year, a similar incident took place in a Florida mall, where once again the combination of beard plus abseiling ended in a very public humiliation. (*digitaljournal.com/article/315399*)

Of course, if the New Age doomsayers are right, all these consumerist activities will prove to be mere vanity, as they believe the world-as-we-know-it is set to end on 21 December. In our final 2012 Watch column, Ted Harrison looks back at how previous millenarians have chosen to spend their last hours. Assuming we *are* back in 2013, we'll be taking a look at how the much-vaunted Mayan Apocalypse turned out, and how its numerous proponents have dealt with this latest 'Great Disappointment'.

"The only hope for the survival of my race is to try to create a hybrid with your species. So, dinner at eight?"

Barbarians, reptilians and spooks

Still, even if this does prove to be our last issue, there's plenty in it to help make your final days happy ones. Remco van Straten and Angeline B Adams celebrate the 80th anniversary of Conan the Barbarian's first appearance in print with a profile of his creator, Robert E Howard, which explores the way in which the mighty-thewed Cimmerian was very much a product of a rapidly-changing and sometimes violent rural Texas. Roger Clarke, meanwhile, takes a look at ghosts from the unusual angle of the class distinctions that underlay their perception in Victorian Britain, paying particular attention to the phenomenon of what might be termed ghost flashmobs. Jack Sargeant previews a new Australian exhibition highlighting the Sicilian paintings of Aleister Crowley, and asks what they can tell us about his magical career. And, in this month's cover feature, Peter Brookesmith looks back at accounts of sex tourists from outer space, revealing a bizarre history of *extremely* close encounters with aliens that run the gamut from well-endowed reptilians to extraterrestrial S&M. Not for the fainthearted!

Reader survey – win stuff!

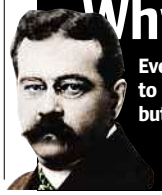
It's been four years since we last ran an *FT* reader survey, so we thought we'd ask for your help once again. Please spare 10 minutes to answer the questions – and you'll be entered into a draw to win an Amazon Kindle Fire! We don't really know what that is, but it sounds good, doesn't it? Turn to p17 for full details.

Finally, we'd like to thank all of our readers, subscribers and contributors for their support throughout 2012 – a happy, fortean Christmas to one and all!

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING



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"COOL SHIRTS!" JONATHAN ROSS

DON'T GO OUT WITHOUT YOUR MOVIE TEE!

strangedays

Stories of the Sasquatch

Berry-pickers and hikers have outdoor encounters while a professor plans to hunt Bigfoot by blimp

Late in the afternoon of Saturday, 29 September, a rainy and windy day, Maggie Cruikshank Qingalik and a cousin went out from Akulivik in Nunavik to pick berries. Nunavik comprises the northern third of the province of Quebec in Canada, a vast area of 171,308 sq miles (443,685km²) with about 12,000 inhabitants, 90 per cent of whom are Inuit. Akulivik is located on a peninsula that juts into Hudson Bay across from Smith Island. "We moved around a lot because we were looking for big berries," said Cruikshank, 46, a language teacher with the Kativik School Board. "My cousin noticed something – she thought it was a hunter… Then she started to be scared. I got up and looked to where she pointed. It was a very large animal, a Bigfoot." It was covered in long, dark hair. She said it was making its way along the side of a hill. "It walks like us but not standing straight like us; it can jump and crawl," she said. She reckoned it was about 10ft (3m) tall. Both women were certain it wasn't a bear or a musk ox, the two animals they immediately thought of as being big and hairy.

Their pictures posted on Facebook (above) show the creature's alleged footprints, which are 40cm (15.7in) long, "definitely within Sasquatch parameters", according to our cryptozoological colleague Loren Coleman. The women said the creature didn't appear interested in them, but they were nevertheless scared and rushed back to warn their neighbours. Cruikshank said they took some video footage of the creature, but they were afraid that making it public "could have devastating

FACEBOOK

results in the small community". She said other people in Akulivik had also seen the creature. A group of walrus hunters who had just returned with their catch were preparing to hide their meat under rocks for the winter when they saw one. Someone else had a sighting near the airport, and a giant biped was seen standing on top of a mountain. Others reported odd collections of caribou bones piled in the hills outside town. An elder found what he said were human bones in a cave and suggested that they might be evidence of Sasquatch depredation.

"There are people telling me they suddenly remember they have seen that thing before," said Cruikshank. "Like 10 or 20 or 60 years ago, they saw it, they just never reported it."

In the past few years, she said, residents had sighted little Inuit, known as Inugagulligaq, a half-man half-fish creature, and giant animals, including a massive anaconda, a very large codfish and monstrous rabbits. Some resemble beings in Inuit cosmology, such as Sedna, the goddess of the sea and marine mammals, Ijiraq, a shape-shifter that kidnaps children, and Kiviuq, a young Inuit hunter with supernatural powers. *CBC News, Cryptomundo.com, 4 Oct; Nunatsiaq Online, 12 Oct 2012.*

● Two hikers in Utah's Provo Canyon thought they were filming a bear in the woods on 29 October, until it stood up and looked in their direction. The fleeting image (above) of the broad-shouldered, hairy biped is quite compelling, compared with a lot of purported bigfootage. They bolted with the camera still running. "We ran straight to the car after that, leaving our tent and everything behind. It's probably all still up there," states Beard Card, the YouTube user who posted the video. "I don't know if Bigfoot exists or not, but that was a huge animal." *Grind TV.com, 4 Nov 2012.*

● Jeffrey Meldrum, an anatomy and anthropology professor at Idaho State University and author of *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science*, is trying to raise over $300,000 to build a remote-controlled dirigible equipped with a thermal-imaging camera to search for the elusive biped from the air. Dubbed the Falcon Project, it was the brainchild of William Barnes, a Utah man who said that in 1997 he watched an immense, hairy creature that was otherwise "well-manicured" approach his tent in northern California before striding up a rocky ledge. Barnes and Meldrum hope to survey swaths of remote forest across parts of the Pacific Northwest, California and Utah; however, Meldrum has yet to raise a single dollar. *[R] 4 Nov 2012.*

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The tale of an avian secret agent bearing a mystery code
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STONE AGE SECRETS
Stonehenge yields up newly discovered artwork
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OVER THE MOONIES
Controversial founder of the Unification Church passes
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US COAST GUARD / GETTY IMAGES

The curse of the Bounty

Replica goes down taking Fletcher Christian's descendent

A crewmember drowned when a Hollywood replica of the sailing ship *Bounty* was hit by Hurricane Sandy on 28 October was a descendant of the chief mutineer aboard the original vessel. Claudine Christian, 42, a former Miss Alaska teenage beauty queen, was a great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Fletcher Christian, the master's mate aboard *HMS Bounty* during its voyage to Tahiti in 1789, who seized command from Lieut William Bligh. The infamous mutiny spawned several movies including the 1962 film *Mutiny On The Bounty*, starring Marlon Brando and Trevor Howard, for which the replica ship was built. The vessel was also used in *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, and to teach sailors about 18th century square-rigged sailing.

The vessel set out from Connecticut for Florida on 25 October with a crew of 11 men and five women, ranging in age from 20 to 66. Writing on her Facebook page, Ms Christian said: "As a descendant of Fletcher Christian… I'm sure my ancestor would be proud." She was on the 180ft (55m) replica vessel three days later when it was hit by 18ft (5.5m) waves 90 miles (145km) off the coast of North Carolina. Its engines failed and the crew, wearing survival suits, abandoned ship into two covered lifeboats, but Ms Christian and the captain, Robin Walbridge, 63, were thrown into the water. Fourteen of the 16 people on board were successfully rescued by helicopter, but Ms Christian was found unresponsive after being washed into the sea, while the captain was still missing at the time of the report. Organisers said he was aware of the storm and had tried to steer a course way from it. *Metro, D.Telegraph, 31 Oct 2012.*

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Dragon will open fete

Basingstoke Gazette, 21 June 2012.

EX-BOXER BATTERED OUTSIDE CHIP SHOP

Cheltenham Echo, no date.

Saints may have jumped too soon

Halifax Courier, 22 Mar 2012.

UK bans 'poor' 23

Sun, 15 June 20912.

Hairy spiders drove me to top of Everest

Western Daily News, 20 June 2012.

WOMAN IS SHEEP DOG CHAMPION

Guardian, no date.

NEW YORK BAN ON BOXING AFTER DEATH

New York Times, no date.

Eagle Dick still dreams

(Melbourne) Sunday Age, 17 June 2012.

Blast husband admits terror link from beyond the grave

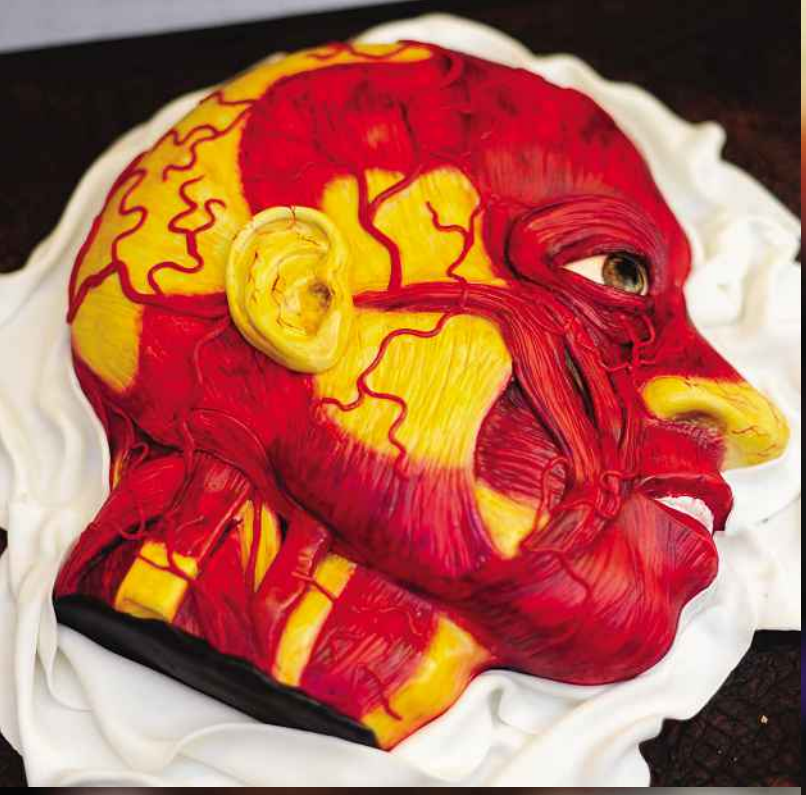
Metro, 21 June 2012.

Zombies keen to keep record

Basingstoke Gazette, 21 June 2012.

Frog appoints education director

Halifax Courier, 24 May 2012.



EAT YOUR HEART OUT!

At the end of October, St Bartholomew's Hospital Pathology Museum in London hosted a Hallowe'en cake shop, Eat Your Heart Out 2012. On sale were more than 50 different sweet 'treats' made by some of the UK's most innovative baking & experimental confectionary talent, all taking a "precise anatomical approach to cake".

Curated by Miss Cakehead, aka Emma Thomas, along with Carla Connolly from Barts, the event featured a gruesome collection of cakes, sweets and drinks based on various pathologies – from syphilis cupcakes (pictured above) to stool sample cocktails (left) – alongside a series of lectures on subjects like bowel cancer and forensic sex crimes.

Among the many unusual items on sale were childhood ailment cookies, featuring impetigo, eczema and mollescum by Nevie Pie Cakes, breast pathology cupcakes from Miss Insomnia Tulip and a cupcake demonstrating maggot therapy on a diabetic ulcer from Sarah Hardy.

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SIDELINES...

FISH FINGER

Nolan Calvin gutted a trout he had caught in Priest Lake, northern Idaho, on 11 September and found a human finger. He put it on ice and called police, who traced it via a fingerprint to Hans Galassi, 31, of Colbert in the neighbouring state of Washington. He had lost four fingers after a tow-wire on a speedboat became wrapped around his hand on 21 June. The accident happened about eight miles (13km) from where the fish was caught. *D.Mail, Metro, 27 Sept 2012.*

GOING NUTS FOR LONG LIFE

A study has shown that castration can increase a man's lifespan by up to 20 years. Scientists analysed genealogical records of the Korean Chosun Dynasty's court from 1392 to 1910 and found that eunuchs lived on average 14–19 years longer than other men. "Testosterone (not produced after castration) is known to increase the incidence of coronary heart disease and reduce immune function in males," the study said. *Current Biology, Sept; Irish Independent, 25 Sept 2012.*

ON A ROLL

A runaway hamster called Wildmutt was found after midnight trundling *up* a steep hill in its plastic wheel, having rolled 300 yards (274m) from its home in Kidderminster, Worcestershire. *Sun, 7 July 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

The Curridge Creature

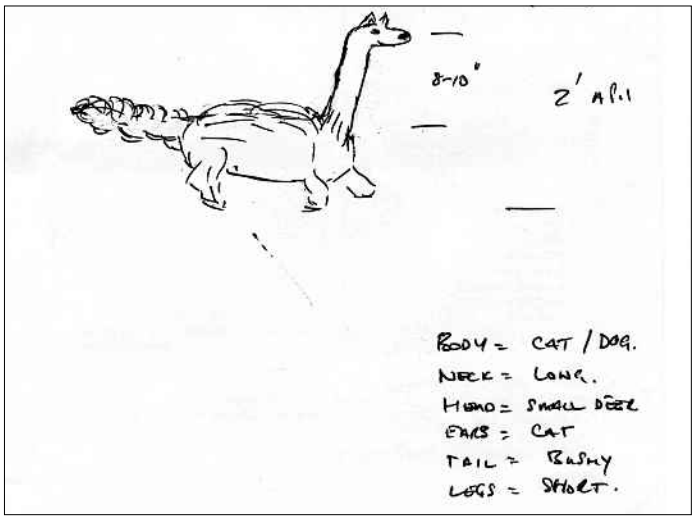
A llama with a deer's head, swan's neck and a bushy tail?

BERKSHIRE ODDITY

Don Prater, 67, is co-owner with his wife of Yarn Fest at Hillier Garden Centre in Hermitage, Berkshire. At 4.55pm on 3 October, he was out with Bozzie, his two-year-old Border Collie. "I was walking the dog along the passage way behind the Women's Institute Hall in Curridge towards Hermitage," he said. "After the footpath bends left, about 25 yards [23m] ahead of us were two animals. One looked like a domestic cat but the other one stunned me. It was a dark or grey colour. The height of its head was about two foot [60cm], but it had the head of a deer. The neck was about eight to 10 inches [20–25cm] long and thin like a swan's neck. The body was a cross between a cat and a dog. It had a bushy tail. Everything about it was wrong. The cat went off into the undergrowth. Then the other animal stared at us, took a couple of turns and wandered off into the hedgerows."

The consensus in the newsroom of the *Newbury News* was that the creature as depicted in Mr Prater's sketch resembled an alpaca or llama. However, both Bucklebury Farm Park and Beale Park, Lower Basildon, said that all their respective animals were accounted for. "The closest we have to an alpaca are our two lovely llamas, Twinkle and Buttons, who are grazing happily in their paddock," said Elizabeth Peplow, spokeswoman for Bucklebury Farm Park.

"Alpacas are herd animals," said Beverley Elliott of Headley Forge Alpacas. "They don't normally rush off – it's not in their nature. However, llamas will go off on their own. I haven't heard from anyone who is missing an alpaca through the British Alpaca Society." Someone on Twitter suggested the strange animal might be a fossa, but as this is a native of Madagascar, it seemed unlikely. Mr Prater



ABOVE: Don Prater's sketch of the strange animal he has dubbed the "Creature from Curridge". Note its cat-like ears and short legs.

"The creature I saw had four legs so it can't be a bird"

discounted it being an escaped rhea, which went missing from the Willows Farm in Enborne last August. "The creature I saw had four legs so it can't be a bird and it was nothing like a baby alpaca," he said. "It was more cat-like. Nobody has seen anything like it since. Everyone thinks I'm bonkers, but I refute that. I saw it, plain as day." *Newbury (Berkshire) News, 11+18 Oct 2012.*

SNAKE SURPRISES

Molly Gorman and Jules Barrett were jogging across Burbage Moor on the outskirts of Sheffield when they spotted what looked like an enormous snake in the heather. They threw a stone at it, but there was no sign of life so they ran on. However, on their way back they found it had moved, so they rang the RSPCA. Expecting a grass snake, officer Kim Greaves turned up with a small plastic box, only to be confronted by a granite Burmese python, variously described as 7ft (2m) or 12ft (3.7m) long.

Hissing, it tried to escape down a nearby rabbit burrow, so she grabbed it with both hands. It wrapped itself around her arm, but she clung on and pulled until it was free of the hole, and secured it inside a duvet cover, tightly fastened with a zip tie. RSPCA inspectors said it was quite wild, riddled with mites and clearly underweight. At the time of the report in the *Sheffield Star* (12 Oct 2012), it was in a specialist reptile facility where it was gaining weight and becoming more manageable.

Snakes can be remarkably hardy. Billy, a 5ft (1.5m) rat snake from the southern United States, survived for 14 months in the wild (including a freezing winter) after escaping from Douglas Stembridge's heated vivarium in Kingsbridge, Devon, in mid-2011. It was found two miles (3km) away, covered in scars from fighting off predators. *Sunday Telegraph, 11 Nov 2012.*

Stranger than fiction

An ass-kicking superhero and a light-fingered poltergeist

MASKED HERO

A curious letter appeared in the *Widnes (Cheshire) Weekly News* on 30 August 2012, concerning an event in Runcorn. The unnamed correspondent said: "I was walking from Halton Lea up towards Halton Village [near Runcorn] around 10pm on August 9 to the British Legion when two men sitting on a nearby bench started shouting over to me. One of them got up and came and asked me for a light. He started talking to me, and his friend got up and walked over too, and started being obscene. I was convinced they were going to rob me. Then out of nowhere somebody came, a man, but he was dressed completely in black, and had red lights where his eyes were and a black mask on! They turned and started to try and fight with him BUT he kicked their asses like a real super hero! And then he disappeared!

"Has anybody else had this happen? I wish to remain anonymous but I need to know if anyone else has seen him. It was like a super hero you see in the films! He was all in black, about 6ft [1.8m] tall and was wearing a dark mask that had two glowing red eyes, bright red – that's all you could see of him! About six of us from the British Legion went to have a look but he was gone. I'm not talking about a man in a mask, or some kid – it was a super hero, as weird as it sounds. I haven't mentioned it since that night, and it hasn't been in the papers. I have googled Runcorn super hero every night since then and there's nothing. It happened where the tunnel comes out from Halton Lea connecting to Halton Village."

SPECTRAL PURSE SNATCHER

Caroline Williams, 39 (above), the former executive director of the charity Weight Concern, complained to police on 19 June 2012 after her flat in Howitt Road, Belsize Park, north London, was broken into 13 times in one week, her personal possessions stolen or moved, and strange notes of poetry stuck to her fridge. She sought refuge at her parents' home in nearby Hampstead.

According to Ms Williams, the police refused to take fingerprints and an officer told her to call in an exorcist. "The police said it was completely unexplained and that there was no point taking forensics," she said. "They said I should consider getting an exorcism and that [the incidents] were caused by forces that are not human… I don't think spirits take purses and I don't think they can move magnetic poetry." (Evidently, she is unfamiliar with the literature on poltergeists.) "I've had poetry left on my fridge using magnetic letter fridge magnets, black and yellow hazard tape left on my garden steps, roses left on my floor. I've had a bowl smashed and I've had things taken. It is very strange. I'm a single woman in a flat and I'm absolutely terrified, but I have been told not to call the boys in blue."

A police spokesman denied that officers had advised her to get an exorcism, adding that "all possible lines of enquiry" had been investigated "and the case has now been closed."

Ms Williams moved into her flat in 2010 and said she used to wake up to find her front and back doors wide open, but had put it down to absent-mindedness. However, she thought somebody must be behind the recent spate of break-ins. She first noticed something was awry when she returned home from the shops to find her front and back doors wide open. She called a locksmith, but within minutes of his departure her doors had been broken into again. "The locksmith came back and said he had never seen anybody unpick a mortice-lock he had installed," she said. "It is totally unexplained." *Hampstead & Highgate Express, 28 June; D.Telegraph, 29 June 2012.*

SIDELINES...

EAGLE'S REVENGE

A furious golden eagle savaged a man after he ate her chick hoping to cure his hæmorrhoids in northern China. *Sun, 17 Aug 2012.*

THE SMELL OF SPACE

Astronauts say the unique smell aboard the International Space Station is reminiscent of meat and metal. It has been described as like "seared steak, hot metal and welding fumes". Astronauts have largely agreed on the scent. Three-time spacewalker Thomas Jones said returning to the ISS "carries a distinct odour of ozone, a faint acrid smell" and is "sulphurous". *MX News (Sydney), 25 July 2012.*

WARM WELCOME

A sushi restaurant in Montreal, Canada, was ordered to change its name from Fukyu, despite the owners claiming it was the name of a karate move. *Sun, 25 Sept 2012.*

MAD SNAKE DISEASE

A mysterious disease that causes snakes to tie themselves in knots may be linked to rats. Pythons and boa constrictors struck by IBD (Inclusion Body Disease) seem drunk and are seen 'stargazing' – staring vacantly upwards for long periods. They get into impossible tangles and eventually perish. Tests have shown they have a previously unidentified arenavirus, a type of virus previously only known in mammals. These are most common in rats and mice, but also cause hæmorrhagic fever in humans. *Metro, 15 Aug 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

NIGEL SUTTON

SIDELINES...

CLEANING FAIRY

A mother returned to her house in Westlake, Ohio, to find someone had broken in, done some cleaning and left a bill for $75 – and her name and number – scrawled on a napkin. Sherry Bush had popped out, leaving her daughter sleeping upstairs. On her return, she found the trash taken out, carpet vacuumed and mugs washed up. She called the number. "I said: 'Did you get the wrong house?' And she said: 'No, I do this all the time.'" Susan Warren was charged with criminal trespass. *Sunday Times, 3 June 2012*.

PLAYING POSSUM

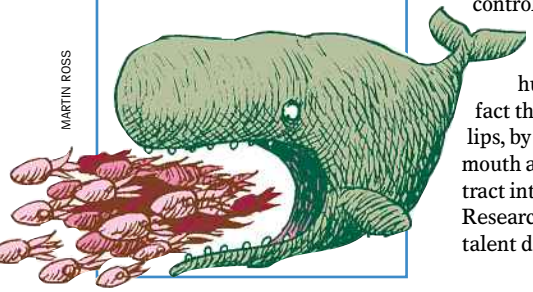
As a fundraiser, the Uruti School in New Zealand's North Island, staged a best-dressed dead possum competition, encouraging pupils to deck out the furry corpses in costumes such as wedding dresses, baby clothes and bikinis, and arrange them in amusing poses, such as riding a tricycle or sunbathing. Animal welfare groups were horrified, but the school principal brushed off criticism. *<i>, 2 Aug 2012*.

TIGER SCARE

Responding to reports of a tiger loose in the streets of Bewdley, Worcestershire, at 5.30am on 9 August, police found a stag party straggler in fancy dress attempting to make off with a traffic cone. *D.Telegraph, 10 Aug 2012*.

STAGGERING STATISTIC

The estimated annual consumption of squid by sperm whales exceeds 100 million tonnes – the entire catch of all fisheries of all species combined, or about half the biomass of all the humans living on the planet. *D.Telegraph, 7 July 2012*.



MARTIN ROSS

TALKING ANIMALS

ELOQUENT ELEPHANTS, CHATTY CATS AND NOC THE SPEAKING BELUGA WHALE

KIM JAE-HWAN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Koshik, who is better at vowels than consonants. **RIGHT**: Hoover, the Bostonian seal (top) and Noc, the talking Beluga.

● Koshik, an Asian elephant at Everland Zoo in South Korea, has astonished his keepers by learning to mimic at least five Korean words: *annyong* (hello), *anja* (sit down), *aniya* (no), *nuo* (lie down), and *choah* (good). Sixteen native Korean speakers were asked to listen to 47 recordings of the 22-year-old pachyderm 'speaking' and spell out what they believed they had heard. Some 56 per cent provided the correct spelling for *annyong*, 44 per cent agreed on *aniya* and 33 per cent identified *nuo*. Koshik is better at mimicking vowel sounds than consonants, with many people mistaking *choah* for *boah* (look) or *moa* (collect).

Cases of mammals being able to make human-like sounds are extremely rare, because even our close relatives such as chimpanzees lack the vocal control to match our pitch and tone. Koshik overcame such anatomical hurdles, including the fact that elephants have no lips, by placing his trunk in his mouth and massaging his vocal tract into a different shape. Researchers suggested that his talent developed as he tried to communicate with keepers when he was the only elephant at Everland between 1995 and 2002. He was first noticed 'talking' in August 2004, when he was 14. The journal *Current Biology* reported that sometimes he speaks when prompted, other times without any encouragement. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 2 Nov 2012*.

The whale was trying to "reach out" to his captors

● Long-time FT readers might recall Batyr, the talking elephant of Kazakhstan, who passed away in Karaganda Zoo in September 1993. Batyr was famous for his Russian phrases. In 1977 a night watchman reported hearing the eight-year-old Indian elephant talking to himself. Zoo deputy director Boris Kosinsky was sceptical, but paid the elephant a visit. "Batyr good boy. Go away", said Batyr. The news spread throughout the Soviet Union and the zoo's attendance shot up. According to Kosinsky, "Batyr has about 10 phrases which we have recorded several times". A recording of Batyr – saying "Batyr is good", "Batyr is hungry" and using verbs like "drink" and "give" – was played on Kazakh state radio in 1980.

Vladimir Spitsyn, director of the Moscow Zoo, visited Karaganda to see the marvel for himself. Alas, Batyr was depressed and didn't say anything during the visit. Spitsyn found the tapes too indistinct to make a judgment, but he didn't think the whole thing was a publicity stunt. By 1983, Batyr's vocabulary had risen to 20 phrases, including the local equivalent of "Have you watered the elephant?" [**FT32:43, 40:14**].

● Acoustic analysis of the sounds made by a beluga or white whale called Noc has revealed remarkable similarities to human speech patterns, indicating that Noc was trying to "reach out" to his human captors, according to a study by Dr Sam Ridgway recently published in *Current Biology*. This is particularly surprising, given

that whales vocalise between themselves by blowing air through their noses rather than using a larynx in the throat. Although there are anecdotes of whales sounding like "children shouting from a distance", this is the first time that scientists have produced objective evidence that they are capable of imitating human speech. Noc, who died in 2007, was about a year old when he was captured off the Pacific coast of Canada in 1977. He was kept with other whales and dolphins in an open-ocean pen at the US National Marine Mammal Foundation in San Diego, California, and was first noticed making the unusual vocalisations in 1984. On one occasion, a diver surfaced after swimming in the pen and asked his colleagues, "Who told me to get out?" Dr Ridgway said: "Our observations led us to conclude that the 'out', which was repeated several times, came from Noc."

Recordings revealed that Noc's vocalisations were pitched at fundamental frequencies several octaves lower than normal whale sounds, and much closer to those of the human voice. His sounds also had a rhythm closer to those of human speech patterns. He had to vary the pressure in his nasal tract while inflating his vestibular sac, a fold of skin found near his blowhole, which is not normally inflated in such an extreme way. "Whale vocalisations often sounded as if two people were conversing in the distance just out of range of our understanding," said Dr Ridgway. "These 'conversations' were heard several times before the whale was identified as the source." The *Shropshire Star* said the whale recordings sounded like "someone playing the kazoo, or perhaps Mr Punch breaking into song." Within four years, however, Noc gave up trying to imitate people and reverted to echolocation pulses, high-pitched whistles and an assortment of noises variously described as "squawks, rasps, yelps and barks". *Independent, Shropshire Star, 23 Oct; D.Mail, 24 Oct 2012.*

Listen to Noc speak online at www.ind.pn/talkingwhale

● Thirty years ago, there was a seal called Hoover in the New England Aquarium in Boston that spoke English – or at least a few choice phrases. Hoover began to make odd noises during his adolescence in 1975 (a seal's adolescence comes at the age of four). Aquarium biologist Greg Early heard Hoover say some words that sounded like English, so he and another scientist began to train the seal and increase his vocabulary. By 1981, Hoover could say "Hello there", "How are ya?", "Come over here", "Get outta here", "get down" and "Hoover" – all in a distinct Boston accent. There was no indication that Hoover understood what he said, but as a colleague of Early pointed out, "How can you be sure? You've never been a seal."

● The lead story of the Turkish television news on 20 March 1993 was a talking cat called Cingene (Gypsy) belonging to Mrs Ayfer Celik of Izmir. The two-year-old black cat had green eyes and a penchant for cheese and chicken. Cingene managed to say at least seven words on television, including *ver* (give), *Nalan* (a girl's name), *Derya* (another girl's name), *demem* (I don't say), *naynay* (baby talk for music), *nine* (colloquial word for grandmother) and *babaanne* (formal word for grandmother). These words, *FT* correspondent Izzet Goksu told us, were clearly audible. Veterinarians examined the cat and confirmed its ability to talk. Mrs Celik turned down an offer of about £10,000 for Cingene. She said she had first heard it talk at the age of three months when she was sitting in the waiting room of a local vet. Cingene leapt from her lap to her neck and said "Annem-Mom". Everyone in the room was taken aback [**FT72:16**].

Perhaps Turkish is the most suitable language for cats. *FT* puts forward this surreal hypothesis because of a news report from 1968 concerning a cat called Pala that belonged to a businessman in an unnamed Turkish town [**FT3:3**]. Pala was able to say *anne* (mother), *baba* (father), *abla* (elder sister) and *Kamile* (the name of the owner's wife). The cat's gift of human language was authenticated by the town's chief veterinary surgeon. Perhaps cats all over the world are talking Turkish, and we just don't notice.

● Any child brought up on the standard fare of Brothers Grimm and so forth knows that lots of animals talk, at least among themselves. Occasionally, a stand is taken against this misleading tradition. According to a Reuters report of 22 April 1931, General Ho Chien, Governor of Honan province in China, issued an official order prohibiting schoolchildren from reading *Alice in Wonderland*, because "bears, lions and other beasts cannot use a human language, and to attribute to them such power is an insult to the human race. Any children reading such books must inevitably regard animals and human beings on the same level, and this would be disastrous." Other books included in the ban were Kipling's Jungle Books, the Brer Rabbit stories and *Puss in Boots. Source: George Ives scrapbooks.*

Paul Sieveking

SIDELINES...

ACCIDENTAL MAYOR

The new mayor of Cimolais (pop. 507) in northern Italy was appointed to the post by accident. Fabio Borsatti, 50, stood as a last-minute favour to his friend Gino Bertolo, the only candidate, who had been worried that people would not vote if he stood unopposed. However, even though Borsatti's own family voted for Bertolo, Borsatti won the poll by 160 votes to 117. *BBC News, 10 May 2012.*

LOST IN THE POST

To celebrate his girlfriend's birthday, Hu Seng from Chongqing in southern China had himself sealed in a parcel and posted to her, but couriers mixed up the address and he spent three hours inside the box instead of 30 minutes. By the time he was delivered to Li Wang's office – where a friend was waiting to record her surprise on camera – he had passed out and had to be revived by paramedics. *D.Mail, 30 Aug; Canberra Times, 2 Sept 2012.*

MYSTERY PAW

The paw of a brown bear from the Sierra de Gredos Mountains was found in the doorway of Navacepeda de Tormes church in Avila, Spain. It was carbon-dated to about 400 years ago. According to the historian Gonzalo de Molina, the last bear in the region was found in 1582, so perhaps the paw is from one of the last local bears. *Levante el Mercantil Valenciano (Spain), 24 Dec 2007.*

APACHE SPARED

Welsh-born father-of-six Mangas Colaradas, 60, adopted an Apache lifestyle after his divorce 20 years ago. In August he won a court battle to keep badger paws and eagle wings in his Swansea semi. He wanted to make a headdress and was accused of wildlife offences. He got the paws and wings in 2000 while living in a tepee near Torremolinos, Spain. "I'm not just some weekend Indian," he said. *D.Telegraph, Times, 23 Aug 2012.*

SIDELINES...

ERRANT CRAYFISH

Postman Jon Parker found a North American signal crayfish in a Hertford postbox on 6 August. A local vet said it was "quite big and in good snapping form". It was taken in by the Waterworld Centre in Enfield, north London. *Hertfordshire Mercury, 9 Aug 2012*.

VEG BANDITS

In August, police were hunting a gang who had pelted pedestrians in Calne, Wiltshire, with cauliflowers, potatoes and bananas. One person was injured by a potato. On another occasion, a car was seen to pull up outside a house before someone got out and threw shredded cabbage at a door. *D.Telegraph, 17 Aug 2012*.

QUITE ROOFLESS

Bridget Zimbango's family was left homeless after a "mysterious" wind blew the roof off their house in Gweru, Zimbabwe. It was the only property affected. Ms Zimbango said: "It was a normal sunny Saturday when a whirlwind confined to my yard produced a queer sound before blowing off my roof." Pastor Adolf Phiri, who witnessed the incident, blamed "evil spirits". *Sunday Times, 23 Sept 2012*.

VACANT POSSESSION

When a man had an epileptic fit during a service at the Universal Church of Kingdom of God in Brazil in 2001, he was beaten up by pastors who thought he'd been possessed by the Devil. The evangelical church has now been ordered to pay him £3,000 in compensation. *Adelaide Observer, 23 Aug 2012*.

LONG ODDS

After buying three lottery tickets in Wichita, Kansas, Bill Isles, 48, told a friend he had more chance of being struck by lighting than winning. Three hours later, a lightning bolt struck the ground near him as he stood in his backyard. "It threw me to the ground quivering," he said. "It kind of scrambled my brain and gave me an irregular heartbeat." He escaped without serious injury. *[R] 31 Mar 2012.*

THE JESUS AND MARY CLAIMS

LOST LEONARDO?

A Scottish woman believes she's found a lost Leonardo da Vinci painting – and that it contains hidden heretical messages. Fiona McLaren's doctor father was apparently given the painting by a grateful patient back in the Sixties. Rather than it being a Madonna and Child with John the Baptist, a common theme in Renaissance art, Ms McLaren believes it is of Mary Magdalene, with Jesus's child. She argues that it was "commissioned by King Francis I of France of his court painter, Leonardo da Vinci", and speculates: "What was the commission; to embody their shared philosophical belief in the sacred union and bloodline of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene."

Ms McLaren, who now lives in the south of France, has worked in advertising and marketing. Her book *Da Vinci's Last Commission* is being promoted by Headline publishers as "the most sensational detective story in the history of art". In an echo of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, the blurb asks: "What would you do if that painting pointed to one of the greatest heresies of our time? And what if it revealed an incredible story that the Roman Catholic Church has been desperate to keep secret at all costs for centuries?" Amongst others, the cover-up seems to have included the Priory of Sion and the Freemasons.

Ms McLaren said that when she showed the painting to the director of Sotheby's in Scotland a decade ago, "he was staggered, speechless save for a sigh of exclamation". If the painting is by Leonardo, newspaper reports say, it could be worth over £100 million. However, a spokesperson for Sotheby's said in August: "The painting was seen by Sotheby's Old Master Paintings Department who concluded it was probably the work of a 16th century Italian painter." The website www.arthistorynews.com described the story as a "barrel of palpable nonsense". *D.Mail, Scotsman, 5 Aug; Catholic Herald, 10 Aug 2012.*

WWW.DAVINCISLASTCOMMISSION.CO.UK

WONDERWALL

CRAIG CONNOR / NORTH NEWS AND PICTURES

Two customers, waiting for their order late one evening at the Mayho Chinese Takeaway in Sunderland, noticed this face on the eatery's crumbling wall and (you guessed it) saw it as the face of Jesus. "We were a little drunk, but it's a miracle," said Ian Ridley. *Metro, 29 June 2012.*

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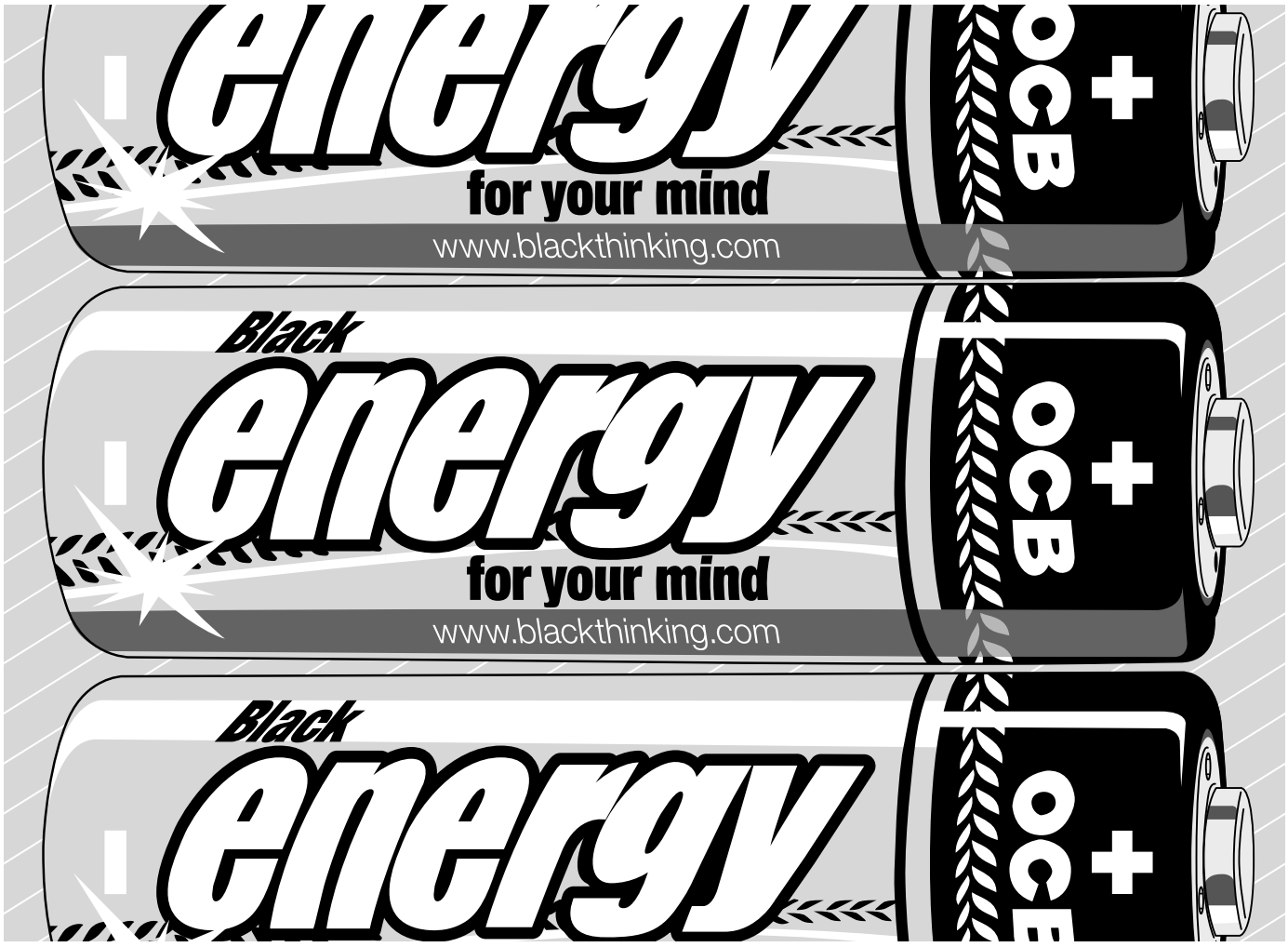


JAPANESE WITCHCRAFT

SHINTO SHAMAN IS FIRST WOMAN EXECUTED IN JAPAN FOR 15 YEARS AFTER 'EXORCISMS' END IN MULTIPLE MURDERS

ABOVE: Sachiko Eto and the 39-year-old hanged for multiple murders. **BELOW:** A print showing a woman tormented by evil spirits.

On 27 September the Japanese Justice Ministry hanged two people convicted of multiple murders. Altogether, seven people have been executed there in 2012 and a further 131 are currently awaiting execution. Japan and the US are among the few democratic and industrialised countries with capital punishment.

Of the latest two, Sachiko Eto, 65 – the first woman to be executed in Japan in more than 15 years – was convicted in 2005 of the murder of four women and two men whose decomposing bodies were discovered in her home in Sukagawa, Fukushima Prefecture, in July 1995. She was variously described as an 'exorcist' and a 'witch' who had her victims beaten to death in 'necromantic ceremonies' to 'free them from demons'.

Japan's long history of Shinto shamanism predates the Christian era. The function of these *miko* (female shamans or shrine maidens) changed over centuries, ranging from prophecy to temple dancing, usually performed in a trance. During the Kamakura period (1185-1333) many temples and shrines became bankrupt or fell into ruin and the dispossessed *miko* became itinerants, charging for whatever services communities wanted. Popular culture (including *manga* and computer games) makes significant use of two types: the *miko* (who mainly perform exorcism and divination and are reputed to possess magical martial arts) and the *itako* (who are almost always blind and who practice spirit possession and mediumship). It is plain that Sachiko Eto saw herself as one of the former.

Eto's apotheosis came in her 40s while working as a travelling saleswoman, dabbling in quack cures and prayer sessions on the side. When some successes went to her head, she believed she had attained divine powers. Through the 1990s a cult grew up around her – which included her daughter and larger family – which she controlled fiercely.

According to the original prosecution, trouble began in 1994 when Eto, then 47, became obsessed with Yutaka Nemoto, 20, the boyfriend of one of her followers. The unnamed 18-year-old girl had come to Eto for an 'exorcism' of bad luck. Instead, Eto declared her young rival to be possessed by evil spirits and ordered the girl to be beaten with *taiko* drumsticks to drive out her demons. Eto, her daughter and Nemoto then beat the girl continuously for three days until she was rescued by her parents.

The frustrated Eto, in her rage, instigated a reign of terror among her followers, and six of them died during prolonged 'drumstick' exorcisms. "Such was the mental grip Eto held on her followers," said the prosecutor, that one of her followers, Mitsuo Sekine, actively took part in the exorcism that killed his wife. Their bodies were left to rot in a room at Eto's house until police discovered them during a raid.

At her trial, Eto said: "I did it as part of a religious service. I never thought they were going to die." However the prosecutor argued that she "tried to make herself a deified ruler and killed

people who threatened her authority in her bid to stop her lover Nemoto from being taken by a female follower." He told the Fukushima District Court: "She carried out the beatings while watching the victims die one by one. It was extremely cruel." Eto was sentenced to death in the Sendai detention centre; her daughter and Nemoto were given life terms; and Sekine 18 years in prison.

Amnesty International's East Asia Director, Roseann Rife, declared the executions "acts of premeditated, cold-blooded killing by the Japanese state." State executions are usually carried out in secret, said Amnesty. "Prisoners are typically given a few hours notice, but some may be given no warning at all. Their families are typically notified about the execution only after it has taken place."

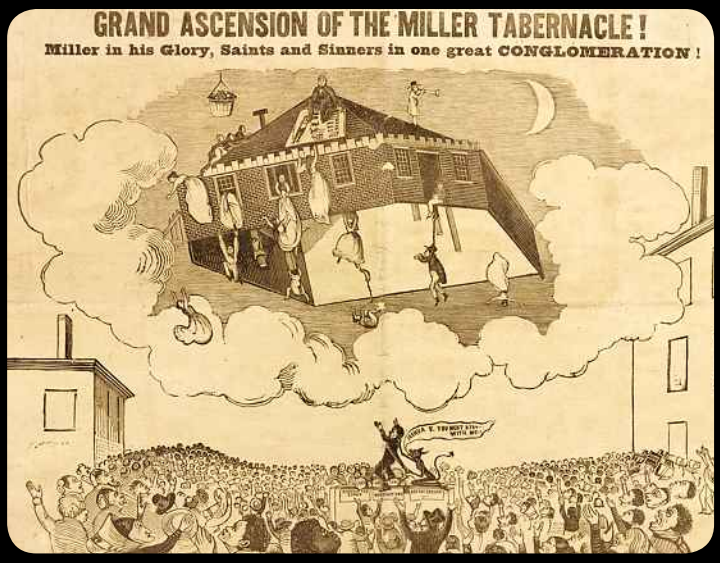
Exorcisms in modern Japan are a thriving niche market, claimed the veteran blogger on Japan's underworld, Jake Adelstein. Apparently, under Japanese real estate law, tenants and buyers can sue their realtor if he has failed to inform them of any previous death or suicide on the premises – something missing from the UK's 'Homebuyer's Pack' – hence the flourishing trade in exorcisms.

However, almost exactly a year earlier, another exorcism of the sinister kind took place in Kumamoto in southern Japan. Tomomi Maishigi (below), a 13-year-old girl, died while being 'water-boarded' by her father and a monk trying to expel an 'evil spirit'. *Doubtful News (online) 28 Sept 2011; Int. Business Times + Amnesty Int., 27 Sept; Jake Adelstein's blog (www.japansubculture.com) 28 Sept; D.Express, 30 Sept 2012.*

2012 WATCH

TED HARRISON PICKS THE BEST PLACES TO WAIT FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

LAST DAY ON EARTH



This year, the number of shopping days to Christmas is immaterial to those who are counting down to the end of the world, which is due four days sooner. The most dedicated believers in the 'Mayan prophecy' are preparing to travel to Bugarach in France (see **FT272:9**, **285:72-75**). On 21 December, the mountain above the village will open and aliens emerge from an underground flying-saucer garage to whisk the elect to safety. Other New Agers in communes around the world eagerly await the Winter Solstice for different reasons. It will be the day when global consciousness moves onto a new holistic and peaceful level.

Deciding where to wait is crucial to End-timers. Some of the followers of William Miller in 1844 sat on the roofs of their homes, so that when they were raptured heavenwards they wouldn't crack their heads on the ceiling. Others watched for the dawn on mountaintops, expecting Christ to appear in His glory with the rising Sun. The most agile climbed trees to get an even earlier glimpse of the Second Coming.

St Adelaide of Italy, wife of the Holy Roman Emperor, prepared her soul assiduously for the Second Coming, which she believed would arrive on 1 January 1000. However, she took to her bed in December 999. She must have been a tad disappointed, as she breathed her last on the 16th, knowing that she would miss the fun. Incidentally, she is the patron saint of people having trouble with the in-laws.

In 1186, John of Toledo's warning so alarmed the Byzantine Emperor that he boarded himself into his palace on the appointed day, while the Archbishop of Canterbury resorted to the power of prayer and called for a day of public atonement.

Londoners who heeded William Bell's apocalyptic warnings in 1761 took to the Thames in boats, reasoning that if the End came as a great flood, they at least would stay afloat.

Joanna Southcott decided the end of the world was timed for Christmas Day 1814. The Messiah would not arrive in clouds of glory, but for a second time as a baby. She announced her pregnancy to her astonished followers (she was aged 64 at the time) and went into labour. No one saw a baby, but Joanna assured everyone that he, Shiloh, had been born, but his ethereal and invisible body was immediately taken back to heaven by angels. Two days later Joanna too was dead, leaving a box to posterity that contained secrets so important that it could only be opened in the presence of 24 bishops (see FT**)

A UFO cult called The Seekers gathered at the home of its founder on another 21 December, this time in 1954, waiting for a knock at the door. Aliens were expected to take them to safety before a worldwide flood. At 12.20 there was a loud bang. Two members went to welcome the aliens, only to be greeted by some sniggering boys playing a joke. The group sat dejected until it was almost morning. Then a telepathic message was received. The destruction had been postponed thanks to the loyal prayers of the believers. There was much rejoicing.

21 May 2011 saw Harold Camping's followers glued to their computers. The Californian evangelist himself went home the day before and asked not to be disturbed. His many worldwide ambassadors were determined to remain cyber-linked until the fateful moment, although how they thought global communications would continue as a 24-hour rolling wave of destruction devastated the Earth from New Zealand to Hawaii was never explained.

History shows that if a date comes and goes uneventfully, it's not the end of the world, so to speak. After their disappointment, the Millerites grew and thrived. Today, their millions of religious descendants are better known as Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Joanna Southcott's believers are few, but still around, waiting for the bishops to open the mysterious box. The claim that it has already been opened with nothing significant found inside, they dismiss as a hoax. Harold Camping, undismayed, declared the world had ended, but on a spiritual plain. William Bell, however, was flung into Bedlam, where people came to laugh at him.

MATT PATTINSON

SCIENCE

THE CAMEL SPIDER MYTH

DAVID HAMBLING refuses to run screaming like a little girl when he hears soldiers' tales of giant intestine-eating spiders from Iraq and instead puts the Solifugæ in the spotlight

Travellers' tales about fabulous animals have long been a source of wonder, enchantment and blatant misinformation. In olden times such stories were impossible to check, but these days we have the Internet and can easily sift scientific fact from folklore. Or can we? The camel spider is a testament to how bizarre animal tales can still sprout from a seed of truth.

The British Army has brought back a treasure trove of grisly stories from Iraq and Afghanistan about camel spiders – highly aggressive 10-legged creatures the size of a dinner plate which scream loudly, run at 30mph (48km\h) and jump 3ft (90cm). The name is said to come from their ability to chew through camel hide; and their bite contains an anæsthetic, allowing them to devour a camel's intestines before it even realises it has been attacked. They are tough and can spring back and attack after being stamped on.

Numerous first-hand accounts from British and US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq describe typical encounters: [1]

"The camel spider was about five inches [13cm] in length and cruising around in the sand. After watching it for about a minute I decided to see what it would do if I threw a rock at it. Bad Idea! As soon as the rock landed the camel spider shot after us faster than any bug I had ever seen. We both screamed and took off running."

"My son is in Kuwait right now. He told us that he was chased out of the bathroom by one of these… he said with the legs it was about the size of a steering wheel."

"Hey, that thing is comin' at us! Another step back… Hey, that thing is really moving! Next, full-fledged retreat – two grown men running down a corridor, hands in the air, screaming like little girls."

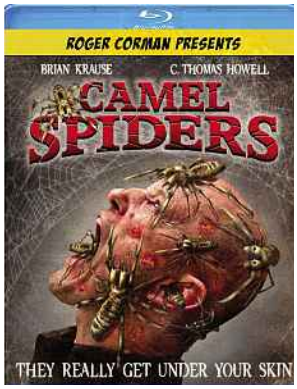
The camel spider's reputation was greatly enhanced by a photograph of a monstrous specimen from Iraq circulated online in 2004, accompanied by text describing its speed, ferocity and appetite for the flesh of sleeping soldiers. [2]

"The camel spider shot after us faster than any bug I had ever seen"

Worse followed in 2008, with a media story of a British paratrooper's family being terrorised by a camel spider which hitched a ride back in his luggage from Helmand. The family's dog died of unknown causes and the family were forced to leave their home. [3]

Camel spiders are not true spiders but are an order of arachnids known as Solifugæ. There are about 1,000 species; they are variously known as wind scorpions, chariot spiders or sun spiders, and the biggest have a body length of perhaps 10cm (4in). Maximum leg span is about 12cm (4.7in); this might be increased slightly by splaying out the legs of a dead spider. [4]

For all the soldiers' accounts of giant camel spiders, actual photographs of dead ones indicate they are the size of a pack of cigarettes rather than a dinner plate, reflecting the human tendency to overestimate threats.



The famous 2004 photograph (top) shows two camel spiders strung together, taken in such a way that it makes them look larger than they actually are.

Camel spiders' running and jumping talents are also overstated; they have not been reliably measured at more than 10mph (16km\h). In all the accounts of soldiers running away from camel spiders, nobody is ever overtaken by one. A spider that ran at 30mph (48km\h) could catch Usain Bolt!

Camel spiders are roaming predators, feeding mainly on insects like grasshoppers as well as small animals like lizards and mice. The front 'legs' are actually pedipalps, adapted mouthparts equipped with sticky pads. These are used for catching hold of prey in much the same way as scorpions' pincers. [5] As this adaptation suggests, they are evolved for small prey, and do not attack humans – or camels, for that matter.

The scientific name Solifugæ means "those who flee from the Sun", and camel spiders seek shade in daytime. When one tries to get into the shadow of a human it can be misinterpreted as aggression. Female camel spiders sometimes line their burrows with hair or fur before laying eggs, and gathering hair may well have given rise to some of the stories about their attacking sleeping soldiers. [6]

Camel spiders will bite in self-defence, and can be provoked into fighting – soldiers have staged gladiatorial contests, pitting them against scorpions and other creatures, for centuries. Their bite is neither venomous nor anæsthetic; by all accounts, though, it is quite painful. Like other arachnids, camel spiders exude flesh-dissolving juices while eating their prey, and carry a lot of bacteria. There is a serious risk of infection if a spider bite is not thoroughly cleaned.

However, in this arena scientific facts take second place to colourful and gruesome tales. When you're facing genuine threats to life and limb, stories about giant spiders are harmless entertainment. Everyone loves having a way of winding up the new guys who have just arrived in theatre, or boasting about how tough it was afterwards, so the more extreme the tale the more likely it is to be repeated.

Perhaps there is also an element of giving respect to a worthy opponent. As one soldier puts it: "They can outrun just about anything, they fight with just about anything, and they don't back down when they are cornered, and they are nearly all bloody ugly… not much different than the British Army really!"

NOTES

1 www.camelspiders.net/camel-spider.htm

2 www.snopes.com/photos/bugs/camelspider.asp

3 www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1049755/Spider-kills-pet-dog-paratrooper-accidentally-brings-home-Afghanistan.html

4 www.solpugid.com/Introduction.htm

5 http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_8795000/8795703.stm

6 www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2086/do-camel-spiders-eat-a-camels-stomach-until-its-intestines-fall-out

FORTEAN TIMES
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WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM/READERSURVEY2013

WIN AN AMAZON KINDLE FIRE

Dear Fortean Times reader,

Every now and then, we like to find out a bit more about who our readers are and what they think about Fortean Times. It's important for us to know what you like and dislike about the magazine. It's been 4 years since our last reader survey, so we thought it was once again time to ask you all for your help.

This year's questionnaire is online at **www.forteantimes.com/readersurvey2013** It will only take a few minutes to complete, and your answers will be very helpful to us. So, please spare the time whether you are a long-term reader or someone who has only just discovered the magazine – in either case, your response will be appreciated. Needless to say, all information you supply about yourself will be kept strictly confidential.

To thank you for taking part in the survey, we will enter you into a free prize draw to win the brand new Amazon Kindle Fire, which has access to over 22 million movies, TV shows, songs, books, and magazines – including the digital edition of Fortean Times!

So please spare a few minutes to fill in the survey at **www.forteantimes.com/readersurvey2013** - we look forward to hearing from you!

Many thanks for your help,
The Fortean Times team.

ENTER NOW

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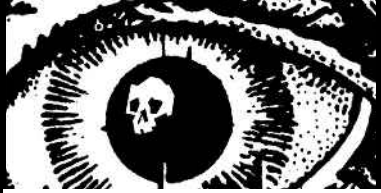


MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE follows a cowled procession of ghostly monks from Pontefract to Boston

THE BLACK MONK OF PONTEFRACT RETURNS?

It was perhaps inevitable that the release of the 2012 film *When the Lights Went Out* (see **FT293:28-37**) would encourage fresh local discussion of the 'Black Monk of Pontefract' poltergeist case. Within two days of the film opening, the *Daily Star* carried a story that inhabitants of the Yorkshire town were saying" "The Black Monk of Pontefract is beginning to stir again".

The paper quoted Carol Fieldhouse, 54, who lives next door to 30 East Drive, the property invaded by the poltergeist between 1966 and 1968. Ms Fieldhouse stated that things took "a sinister turn" during the summer of 2012 when she heard loud noises coming from inside number 30, which she attributed to a television being played too loudly by nephews of Mr Philip Pritchard, the owner of the property. On seeing Mr Pritchard tidying up the garden, she mentioned the noise to him, only to be told, "There's no TV in there. It's empty." She saw Mr Pritchard turn pale and heard him say, "God, it's started again". She added "I haven't seen him since".

Mr Pritchard had sold the property to film producer Bil Bungay, who, the paper claimed, "has witnessed strange goings on" since taking possession. In particular, a special showing of the film inside the house was marked by the batteries on mobile telephones losing power and Tash Connor, who plays the teenage girl affected, admitted to being "freaked out". According to the *Daily Star*, members of the Pritchard family had expressed the fear that making the film might provoke the ghost and only agreed to assist if the film was shot on a set in Huddersfield and their names were disguised.

If the *Daily Star* and Carol Fieldhouse are to be believed, these precautions have not succeeded, as there have been "other odd incidents". Ms Fieldhouse held a séance at which she allegedly contacted the Black Monk – who went on to state his resentment at the new occupiers and issued a threat "that he will have them gone in 12 months". This development perhaps tells us more about the wishes of Ms Fieldhouse, suggesting that on some level she might even be desirous of having a ghostly presence next door.

Another more moderate take on 30 East Drive came from Lauren Potts, a journalist from the local *Pontefract & Castleford Express,* who visited the house two weeks earlier in a spirit of scepticism. "Ever the cynic," she wrote, "I took my chances of incurring the sleeping wrath of the Black Monk… and crossed the cursed threshold of 30 East Drive."

Inside, she found the apparently normal and unremarkable interior of a three-bed semi-detached, appearing like any other home built on a 1960s council estate, "with soft pastel walls, floral wallpaper and rosy pink carpets". However, on venturing into the Pritchards' former bedroom, where the Monk had once manifested "as a faceless black-cloaked apparition, hovering over the Pritchards' bed", Ms Potts heard noises, which she described as "a muffled banging emanating from the floorboards". After leaving the property, she enquired with a neighbour (perhaps the same Carol Fieldhouse) and asked if she had been moving furniture, only to be told that all she had done during the afternoon was mop the floor. Ms Potts also noted what she considered a strange chill at number 30, with the thermostat reading 19 degrees, although the sun was streaming in the windows.

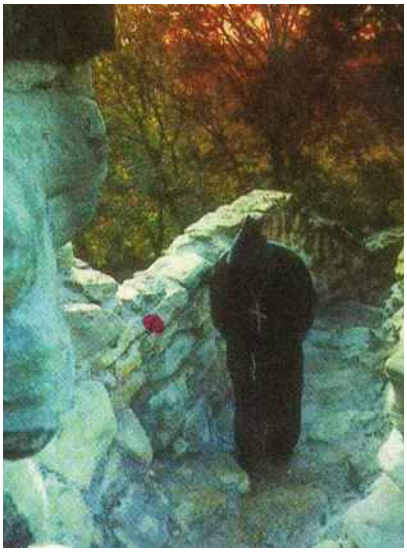
"Unexplained, perhaps. Ghostly? The jury's out," was Ms Potts's final verdict.

Without further investigation, it is impossible to determine whether anything beyond normally occurring sounds and incidents is going on at 30 East Drive today, the original manifestations having ceased in 1968. The sensations of cold in the property may have their origins with underground streams and springs repeatedly mentioned as existing beneath the house (see *Poltergeist*, Colin Wilson, 1981). Even if manifestations have occurred, we cannot be sure if it is the same presence (presuming that there was a distinct entity in the first place, rather than just expressions of energy). While some 25 per cent of poltergeist reports suggest a place-centred rather than person-centred disturbance, these latest reports of alleged activity at 30 East Drive are certainly nothing compared with the 'Black Monk' in his late-Sixties heyday, and if Carol Fieldhouse has been experimenting with séances it's entirely possible that she is generating the effects herself. Alternatively, it could just be as Colin Wilson put it in *Poltergeist!* – that the entity behind the Black Monk "is waiting for another provider-of-energy to offer it the chance to erupt into the space-time world of humanity…"

SOURCE: *Castleford & Pontefract Express*, 1 Sept; *Daily Star*, 15 Sept 2012.

BIL BUNGAY

ABOVE: The house at 30 East Drive, Pontefract, up for sale earlier this year. **BELOW**: An image of the 'Black Monk' seen haunting the grounds of Pontefract Castle (from the *Pontefract and Castleford Express*, 3 Oct 1996).



JOURNALIST LAUREN POTTS HEARD "A MUFFLED BANGING EMANATING FROM THE FLOORBOARDS"

MORE PHANTOM MONKS

While the malevolent Black Monk may or may not have departed from Pontefract, Britain is still turning up reports of phantom monks, good, bad and indifferent. In 1970, Eric Russell suggested that ghostly monks and nuns were a product of the Reformation in Britain, but many other Catholic countries in Europe and Latin America claim such traditions. Stories of ghostly monks seem to proliferate in Britain from the early 19th century, perhaps a legacy of the Romantic movement. Best known is Lord Byron's "Goblin Friar" at his ancestral home at Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, which the poet (right) included in his epic *Don Juan* as a harbinger of death and disaster (Byron himself claimed to have seen the ghost on the eve of his ill-fated marriage to Anne Milbanke). Today, the ghostly monk remains an established apparitional motif which shows no signs of going into decline, although reliable sightings are few and far between; and, as with the Black Monk of Pontefract, fixing a firm identity to manifestations can be fraught with difficulty.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

For instance, no one could shed any light on recent sightings of the headless monk who supposedly walks between the church and the ancient George Inn in the village of Meopham, Kent, when I made local enquiries in mid-October 2012. The headless phantom story is readily promoted in literature, at the pub and on the Internet, and is originally derived from various ghost books from the 1970s in which the figure was simply described as an anonymous 'headless man'. At Meopham, I found – perhaps significantly – that the church is dedicated to John the Baptist, who was famously beheaded, and this might provide a clue as to the origins of this story. Despite it being celebrated locally, no one I spoke to knew of any current witnesses.

However, an interesting sighting of a phantom monk in Gloucestershire over New Year 2011-2012 was posted on the website Uncanny UK in August 2012 by a Denise Forbes, who saw the figure in the village of Bishop's Cleeve near Cheltenham. Ms Forbes stated that shortly after the Christmas holidays she and her sister made the 15-minute walk from their parents' house in the village to a local pub, *The Royal Oak*. They left the pub around 10.30pm on what Ms Forbes recalled as "a cloudy night with the Moon almost at the full and a strong wind blowing the clouds along" when both saw the figure of a man crossing the road. She described him as "a tall man, broad in the shoulders, in a long, pale-coloured robe with the hood up. His head and shoulders were slightly thrust forward, as if he were in haste but not enough to break into a run. He didn't glide, he strode and seemingly with purpose."

Both sisters saw the cowled apparition cross the road from the entrance to a small lane, known as Priory Lane, heading towards the Old Priory near the church of St Michael and All Angels. Ms Forbes states that they saw the figure pass through a pair of closed gates to a house built next door to the Priory. By the time they reached the spot, the form had vanished. Interestingly, Ms Forbes states that during their sighting "there was absolutely no sound around us at all. It was like being the first person out after a heavy snowfall, a 'muffled' silence." This feature recurs in accounts of many sightings of ghosts and UFOs and has been dubbed the 'Oz factor' by Jenny Randles. Ms Forbes knew that she was seeing a ghost and was not frightened: "If anything, I was excited enough to run down the road after him."

Subsequently, on making enquiries she discovered that the daughter of a neighbour had seen the monk one summer evening on the same lane. She also recalled the figure was "striding along in a bit of a hurry".

This report is similar to many other apparitional accounts over the years, although regrettably artistic licence and embellishment often create more sensational tales. For example, on 15 October 2012 the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle* ran a list of haunted places in the city, including in fifth position the Castle Keep and Black Gate. These, we are led to believe, are haunted by "a dark monk who has no eyes who attacks visitors and leaves marks on them". This certainly sounds terrifying, but since the story is being promoted by an entertainment company, scepticism is fully justified until identifiable witnesses can be produced.

Nonetheless, that some kind of factual origin can lie behind even so improbable-sounding a story is confirmed by the background to the haunting of the Liverpool Arms, in Conwy, Wales. This quayside inn is supposedly haunted by a sinister monk whose appearance – like Byron's Goblin Friar – is supposedly associated with death and misfortune. The origins of the story can be traced to a report in the *North Wales Weekly News* in June 1980, when the then landlady Jacqui Plumb saw the spectre of the monk shortly after a member of her family was involved in a serious accident.

"I went into the spare bedroom. This is the tower room and it was about 4pm. When I opened the door I saw him just across the room, a monk with his hands together kneeling and praying," she said.

"I was so amazed that I closed my eyes and shook my head to make sure I was actually seeing something. I opened my eyes and he was still there." Whether there was any actual connection with the accident is a matter which cannot be resolved, but 'Black Monk of Pontefract' type antics were also experienced, with poltergeist activity, the mysterious disappearance of objects and the violent shaking of a visitor's bed. Just over a decade later, a 6.5ft (2m) tall male ghost was claimed at the pub in April 1991, allegedly making a lunge towards 20-year-old barman Andrew Young, who dropped a crate of beer in fright. The tall ghost was even alleged to have ripped his shirt! Andrew Young further claimed the figure was accompanied by the form of a young boy.

Margaret Williams, author of *The Ghosts of Conwy* (1982), has speculated that the 1991 ghost was of a previous pub landlord and his son who drowned in the estuary during the 1930s, rather than being connected with the praying monk. The current licensees, who have been at the pub since 1997, are aware of persistent rumours of hauntings but have experienced nothing themselves.

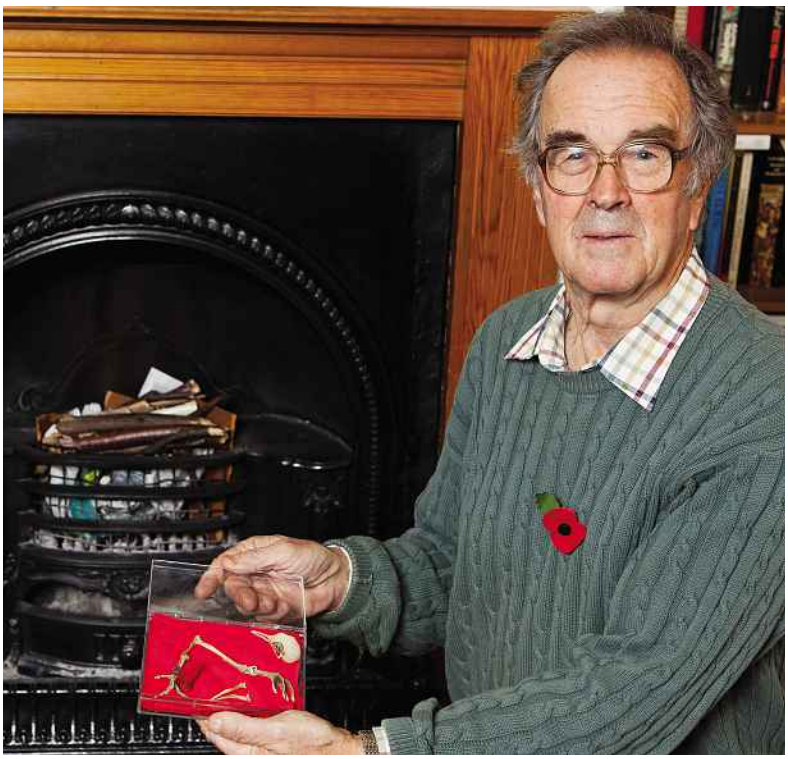
More recently, in Lincolnshire, the footsteps and noises attributed to a ghostly monk (who is described as "friendly") have been reported at P and M Framing, a picture framing shop in South Street, Boston. Shop owner Mandy Colber says she has heard someone walking in a room above her business, which forms part of the premises of the Arbor Club where she sometimes works at the bar. On going upstairs, no intruder, or any explanation, could be found. She states: "I am quite often in the back in my workshop and come out to greet a customer because I have heard footsteps across the shop floor but there's no one there." Mandy Colber's late father also reported hearing noises and refused to work late in the shop, but Mandy is not worried, saying, "It's never caused me any harm." However, the identification of the ghost as a monk is an assumption resting solely upon the fact that parts of the shop date from the 13th century Blackfriars complex, with Mandy's workshop retaining a large mediæval stone arch. Mandy admits she has never actually seen anything, which ultimately leaves the identity of her ghostly presence an open question.

SOURCES: *Ghosts*, Eric Russell (Batsford, 1970);'Liverpool Arms haunted pub Conwy', *North Wales Weekly News,* 17 May 2012; 'Ghostly goings on puts friendly monk in the frame', *Boston Target*, 24 Aug 2011. With thanks to Michael Ahmed.

D-DAY PIGEON MYSTERY

Will the avian secret agent found in a chimney yield its cryptic message at last?

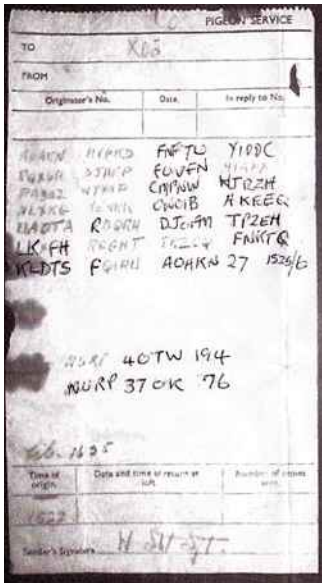
A STERLING / GETTY IMAGES



LEE SANDERS / SWNS.COM

ABOVE: One of the many military pigeons that served in WWII. **ABOVE RIGHT**: David Martin, with the remains of carrier pigeon 40TW194. **BELOW**: The bird's coded message.

Having survived the flight from Nazi-occupied Europe, carrier pigeon 40TW194 landed on a chimney of a 17th century house in Bletchingley, Surrey. Perhaps overcome by fumes from the fire below – or wounded by German snipers stationed on the English Channel coast – the avian secret agent died, with an important encrypted message in a tiny capsule strapped to its leg. Its body lay undiscovered in the chimney for around 40 years. Then in 1982, David Martin, the current owner, decided to renovate one of his chimneys, which was full of twigs and rubbish. Amid a cascade of pigeon bones "down came the leg with the red capsule on," he said in one of many recent interviews. The capsule was of the type used by the SOE (Special Operation Executive), who undertook spying and sabotage missions in Europe. Inside was a very thin piece of paper, with 27 codes, each made up of five letters or numbers, hand-written by a Serjeant W Stott – the spelling of Serjeant was



SWNS.COM

significant because the RAF used J, while the Army used G. It was addressed to "XO2", now thought to be code for Bomber Command, and was marked as a duplicate to a message carried by Pigeon 37DK76. (The first two numerals indicated the bird's year of birth.)

These were the James Bonds of the pigeon world

The fact that two birds had been dispatched with the same message, and that the message was in code, seemed to suggest it was carrying word of some major development. Bletchingley lies on a flight path between the Normandy landings in June 1944 and the famous code-breaking centre of Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, 80 miles (130km) to the north. It was also close to Montgomery's HQ in Reigate, Surrey, where he planned the D-Day landings.

"The bird may well have been flying back to Monty's HQ or Bletchley Park from Nazi-occupied Normandy during the invasion," said Colin Hill, curator of the permanent 'Pigeons at War' exhibition at Bletchley Park (which was home to a classified MI6 pigeon loft during World War II). The pigeons, he said, routinely accompanied both ground forces and RAF bomber crews who were told to use the birds to report back their positions if they crash-landed in hostile terrain. All the pigeon messages in the Bletchley Park archives are in longhand, not code, suggesting that the Bletchingley message must be "highly top secret". It is left to the Gang of Fort to comment on the curious place-name coincidence. Had 40TW194 seen the "Bletch" bit on a signpost and thought it had arrived at its destination? The companion bird, 37DK76, does not appear to have made it home either. Adding to the mystery, Mr Hill said, is that neither bird's code number is included in any historical archive. They were, he said, "special pigeons", in much the same way as James Bond was a

special agent.

At first, said Mr Martin, now 74 and a retired probation officer, no one seemed interested in what might well be a gripping yarn of feathered valour, but in 2010 he and his wife Ann finally persuaded cryptographers at GCHQ (Government Communication Headquarters) in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, to have a go at cracking the code. It's unclear why this has only now become a news story.

Some 100,000 pigeons were deployed in World War I, and 250,000 in World War II. The Dickin Medal, the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross, was introduced in 1943. In the next six years it was awarded to 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, three horses and a cat – making birds the bravest of the brave. They include a pigeon called Gustav, first to relay news of the D-Day landings, flying 150 miles (240km) in five hours on 6 June 1944, and an American pigeon called G.I. Joe, or Pigeon USA43SC6390, which, according to its citation, "brought a message which arrived just in time to save the lives of at least 100 Allied soldiers from being bombed by their own planes". *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 2 Nov; Int. Herald Tribune, 3 Nov 2012.*

NAZI INTERFERENCE

On 13 October 1941, listeners to a weekly magazine programme for Service women on the Forces wavelength of the BBC heard a man's voice burst in with the comment: "Don't listen to the BBC. We don't want the National Government." For a spell the voice made clearly heard interjections, the theme of which was a call to get rid of the Government and install a 'People's Government'. During an interval, the BBC announcer Alvar Lidell said: "If you are hearing interruptions, you may take it that these are direct interruptions from the enemy." In a statement, the BBC said: "This background interference is being heard in various parts of the country, but in certain areas, as is generally known, BBC reception is stronger and consequently the interference is less noticeable."

The Home Service was also affected. BBC experts had no doubt that the Nazis were responsible; they had recently begun broadcasting from Calais. Among the questions asked by the wireless heckler on 13 October were: "Do you know how much money Churchill is paid by the Jews?" and "Has Churchill played fair with you?" Another comment was: "We are being swindled and led up the garden path and sold to America." Later the voice said: "Remember, Churchill lost you your Empire. It is your duty to throw out Churchill." Another remark was: "Churchill will never be a Duke of Marlborough." Here is an extract from the dialogue during the news broadcast:

Announcer: "The Germans are keeping up pressure in Ukraine."

Voice: "Wait till tomorrow."

Announcer: "The RAF made a big offensive over Northern France today."

Voice: "And got shot down!"

The report in the *Daily Telegraph* (14 Oct 1941) concluded: "So far, the BBC has refrained from interfering with programmes from the German stations, but whether this attitude will be observed in view of last night's occurrence is doubtful." *Fortean Times* wonders why such mutual radio hacking didn't take off during World War II and subsequent conflicts… or perhaps it has happened more than we realise. *D.Telegraph, 14 Oct 2012.*

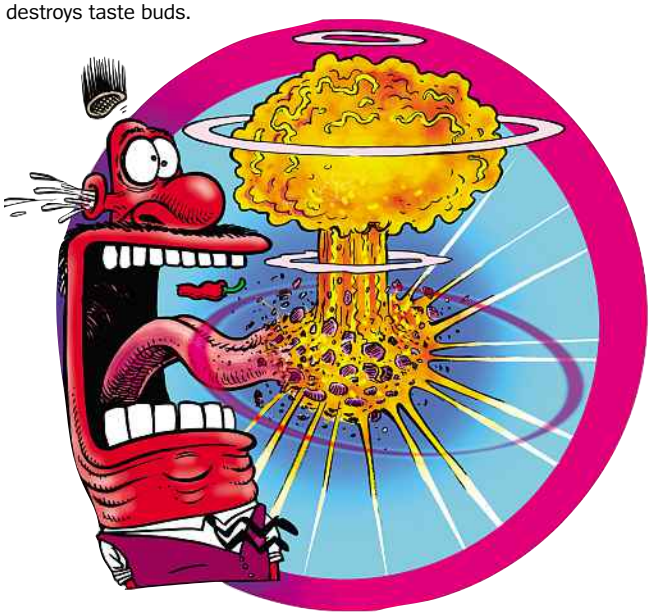
Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

160. TASTEBUD MASSACRE

The myth

Very spicy food – specifically, that which gets its "heat" from capsicums – destroys taste buds.



HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

Capsaicin, the active ingredient in chilli peppers, causes numbness in the mouth; this is because, for unknown reasons, the nerve endings react to capsaicin as if it were heat. To protect you from the pain of being burned, your brain blocks the sensation, which you experience as temporary and localised numbness. How temporary and how local, of course, depends on how piquant the food is, but the key word is temporary. And this is true no matter how extreme the spiciness of the chilli; a gobfull of ultra-hot peppers, eaten raw, might leave you numb-tongued for many hours, but you will regain the full range of feeling in your mouth sooner or later. Although your sense of taste is limited for the duration, which may make you feel as if your taste buds have been destroyed, no permanent damage is done, or can be done. It is true that we lose much of our ability to taste during our lives, but that's just senescence. Taste bud cells die off and are replaced all the time, but not eternally; eventually, they die and are not replaced. The spiciness or blandness of your diet over the years will have no effect on the subtlety of your palate in old age.

Sources

http://news.yahoo.com/myth-debunked-spicy-food-doesnt-really-kill-taste-190810067.html

Disclaimer

All sources for this seem to refer back to a single study; not always a good sign in the de-mything business. If the arguments taste wrong to you, please let us know.

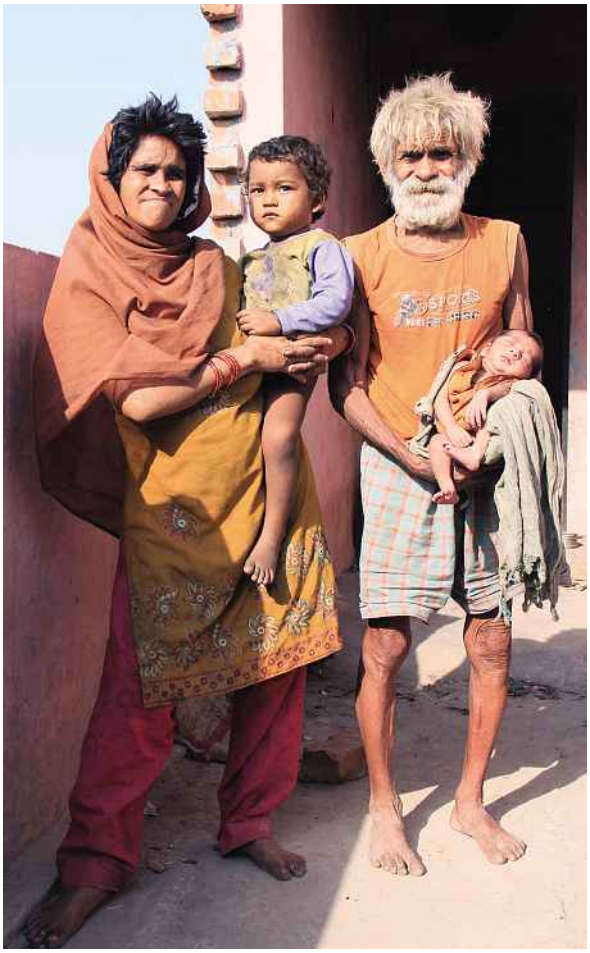
Mythchaser

Is it true that the original colour of the exterior brickwork on Number Ten Downing Street is yellow; that it became blackened by industrial pollution in the 19th century; and that it is now regularly painted black, because that has become its "traditional" colour?

FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

MEDICAL BAG

A 94-year-old dad recommends milk, a nine-year old Chinese child gives birth, and the rare women with double uteruses (and double birth dates)



SAGAR KAUL / BARCROFT INDIA

BARCROFT INDIA / BARCROFT MEDIA

ABOVE LEFT: Ramjeet Raghav with his wife Shankuntala, 54, and sons Vikramjeet and baby Ranjeet. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Rinku Devi's twin sons, born from different uteruses.

WORLD'S OLDEST FATHER

Ramjeet Raghav, a 94-year-old farmhand from Kharkhoda in the northwestern Indian state of Haryana, became the world's oldest father in 2010. Ramjeet, who was a wrestler in his youth, believes the secret of his longevity is a pound (0.5kg) of almonds and a pound of ghee (clarified butter) washed down with five pints (three litres) of milk every day. His age was confirmed by his pension records, which give a birth year of 1916. His wife Shakuntala Devi (aged 59, 51, or "in her late forties"), gave birth in hospital to son Vikramjeet (or Karamjit or Bikramjeet), their first child, in September (or October or November) 2010. Ramjeet spent

"The secret of longevity is almonds, ghee and milk"

25 years as a widower before meeting Shakuntala, herself a widow, in 1995. Both were childless. The family lives in a two-roomed hut, and Ramjeet earns £35 a month digging fields for nine hours a day. "I am a strong follower of Lord Shiva," he said. "This child is God's gift." (The previous oldest father record holder, Indian farmer Nanu Ram Jogi, was 90 when his 21st child was born in 2007; the record holder in the UK in 2010 was Raymond Calvert, 79.)

Then, in October 2012, Ramjeet beat his own record by siring a second son at the age of 96: Ranjeet, born weighing 4lb 7oz (2kg). "I have asked my wife to be sterilised now," he said. "I don't want any more children, we can't afford it. I want my boys to go to a school and study." *Sun, 30 Dec 2010, 10 Jan 2011, 17 Oct 2012; D.Mail, D.Mirror, Independent, D.Telegraph, 30 Dec 2010; D.Mail, 17 Oct 2012.*

YOUNG MOTHERS

A Chinese schoolgirl aged nine became one of the world's youngest mothers in February 2010. She was eight-and-a-half months pregnant when she was admitted to Changchun Hospital in Jilin province. She gave birth to a healthy 6lb (2.75kg) boy two days later. Her family – said to be from Songyuan in northeast China – refused to discuss the pregnancy. Sex with a child under 14 is illegal in the province and brings an automatic rape conviction and long jail term. Police were said to be trying to track down the father.

In 1910, a boy aged nine and a girl aged eight became China's youngest parents ever recorded. The youngest mother in the Soviet Union was a six-year-old who gave birth to a dead child in 1930. She had been raped by her grandfather. In April 2000, a Russian girl from the Rostov

region gave birth to a child when she was eight. The child's father was a 13-year-old boy. The world record for youngest mother belongs to Lina Medina from Peru, who delivered a baby in 1939 at the age of five years and seven months [**FT42:17**]. For a mother aged eight and four aged nine, see **FT53:27, 56:27, 68:18.** *D.Mirror, aroundglobe.net, 3 Feb 2010.*

BORN FROM TWO WOMBS

Angie Cromar, 34, a maternity nurse from Murray, Utah, who already had three children aged under eight, was told she was pregnant with a boy and a girl, but they were not twins because she had two wombs, a rare condition known as uterus didelphys, found in about one in 2,000 women worldwide (or one in five million, according to another report). An ultrasound showed that one fœtus was a week older than the other. The babies were due in the autumn of 2010. *D.Mail, 17 July 2010.*

In 1981 a US woman with uterus didelphys became pregnant with triplets, two in the left uterus and one in the right. The babies on the left were delivered on the same day while the baby on the right was delivered 72 days later. Hannah Kersey, 23, from Devon also gave birth to triplets from a double uterus in 2006. In 2009 Sarah Reinfelder, 21, from Michigan, gave birth to two girls from different wombs. *D.Mail, 17 July 2010.*

Rinku Devi, 28, the wife of an army officer, gave birth to healthy twin boys in the northern Indian city of Patna on 29 July 2011. Dr Dipti Singh delivered the premature babies, weighing 2kg and 1.5kg (4lb 4oz and 3lb 3oz), by Cæsarean section. During labour, doctors discovered Mrs Devi had conceived her sons in separate uteruses a month part during successive menstrual cycles. "I got to know about having two uteruses when I was already in labour," she said. "I had not heard of anything like this before." *Metro, MX News (Sydney), 9 Aug 2011.*

A-Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden

MAURICIO LIMA / GETTY IMAGES

THREE VENEZUELAN MYSTERY CATS

Facebook friend Michael Merchant from Maine, USA, recently informed me that during a visit to the jungles of Venezuela, he received descriptions from Benny, his local Pemon Indian guide, of three seemingly unknown types of wild cat undocumented in the cryptozoological literature. One of these, said to be rosetted like a jaguar but as big as a lion, reputedly hunts in packs and is greatly feared by the Pemon on account of its extremely aggressive nature. Uniquely, whereas the heavier adult members of the pack hunt terrestrially on the forest floor, the younger members hunt arboreally, travelling through the tree tops. Unlike the adults, these youngsters are unspotted (and possibly darker in colour). A second even bigger type of Venezuelan mystery cat, also rosetted as an adult but allegedly the size of an ox and once again very belligerent, was claimed by Benny to hunt alone. A third type, smaller than the previous two but very bold, was supposedly a pack hunter, the pack's members attacking together as a group. It was unspotted, its pelage being a solid tan to dark brown. *Michael Merchant, pers. comms, 27 Aug 2012*

GUYANA'S MYSTERY IN BLUE

This is not the only hitherto unpublicised South American cryptid to have been brought to my attention lately. Only four species of predominantly blue-plumaged macaw are recognised by science: the hyacinthine (top), Lear's (endangered in the wild), glaucous (probably extinct), and Spix's (above right; extinct in the wild). All of these are only on record from central South America, predominantly Brazil. Recently, however, I received an email from pets expert/author David Alderton that contained the following very interesting news:

"I was going through some old papers last week, and I came across some notes that I'd made at a CITES meeting... I discussed this with the Guyanese representative – a vet called Mrs Pilgrim, and a parrot enthusiast who lived in Guyana – Louis Martin. They both independently told me of reports of a rare, large blue macaw that inhabited

PATRICK PLEUL / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

the hinterland forests of Guyana. Louis confirmed that it was not a hyacinthine macaw, but believed it to be a new species. I wondered whether you'd ever come across reports of this type? It was the fact that two experienced parrot observers told me independently that made me think these sightings could be more than just hearsay. According to Louis, it was completely blue, but not as big as a hyacinthine. (It had initially struck me that these reports might possibly refer to blue & gold (Ara ararauna) macaws missing their gold plumage, which is then replaced by white, based on the range of this species. Individuals of this type have been recorded in the wild, and I think there is one in a zoo in France, but this seems unlikely)."

I agree that it is unlikely that a mutant of this nature would be responsible, because it would be blue and white, not completely blue. Apart from two highly controversial blue-type macaws – the so-called purple macaw and the black macaw – that may (or may not) have once existed on certain Caribbean islands but which are now long extinct – I have not encountered reports of mystery all-blue macaws before. Consequently, David's disclosure is most interesting, especially as Louis Martin discounted the possibility that the unidentified Guyanan form was a hyacinthine macaw – the only common species of blue macaw in the wild. If any parrot enthusiasts are reading this and have any additional information, we'd love to hear from you. *David Alderton, pers. comm. 28 Oct 2012.*

MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of-*Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bergjournals.com/timeandmind).

ADAM STANFORD

STONE AGE HUB

Megalithomaniacs are aware that the Orkney Isles, off the northern coast of Scotland, possess important Stone Age monuments like the Ring of Brodgar, the Stones of Stenness, Maes Howe passage grave, and much more, and it has long be known by archæologists that distinctive pottery originating in Orkney found its way throughout the British Isles. But no one knew until relatively recently just *how* important the place was in the Neolithic era: a vast temple complex that is said to be without parallel in Western Europe has been uncovered. "For decades we thought it was just a hill made of glacial moraine," says Nick Card of the Orkney Research Centre for Archæology who discovered the Ness of Brodgar complex. "In fact the place is entirely manmade, although it covers more than six acres [c.2.5 hectares] of land."

We commented in passing in this column on the first glimmerings of this find some six years ago, but the story has moved on dramatically. Excavation has by now revealed the complex to have massive, well-constructed walls, up to 13ft (4m) thick and more, some forming a series of temples.

"The place seems to have been in use for at least 1,000 years," Card says. Over a dozen temples have so far been uncovered, but apparently this accounts for only about 10 per cent of the site as a whole. The bones of sacrificed cattle and pieces of sophisticated pottery have been found scattered throughout the site, and the place appears to have been colourful in its heyday – traces of pigments on some walls showed that they had been painted, variously, red, brown, orange, and yellow, while the colours of building materials had in some places been carefully selected.

Pathways, some of them concentric, were made with the same skill as were the walls. Elements within the complex align toward Maes Howe and, possibly, the Stones of Stenness. All the archæologists involved stress that this had to have been the key Neolithic ceremonial centre in the whole of Britain around 5,000 years ago, and acknowledge that they have never come across anything like it before. It seems the place was "decommissioned" around 2,300 BC, after a huge feast in which 600 head of cattle were slaughtered.

Be in no doubt, readers, this is major archæological news and we will be hearing much, much more about it as work continues. *Guardian, 6 Oct 2012, and various sources.*

ENGLISH HERITAGE

ABOVE: Researchers at work on the laser scanning survey of Stonehenge commissioned by English Heritage.
ABOVE INSET AND RIGHT: The previously undiscovered axe-head carvings now revealed on the stones.

SECRET SYMBOLS

A thorough laser-scan survey of Stonehenge has revealed 71 previously undiscovered carvings of Bronze Age axe-heads plus one of a Bronze Age dagger. They are very faint, and had been carved graffiti-like into the stones long after they had been erected. Almost all the axe-heads are shown blade uppermost. It may be a clue to note that in Indo-European tradition axe-heads were often associated with storm gods, and some surviving European lore states that upwards-facing axe blades can protect people and crops from lightning and storm damage. The laser survey also provided hints that, among other things, the monument had been constructed to be viewed along sight-lines associated with both the summer and winter solstices. *Guardian, 9 Oct 2012*.

MAKING A SPLASH

Sixth-century AD accounts describe how Geneva, at the western tip of Lake Geneva, Switzerland, was engulfed by a giant, tsunami-like wave causing widespread death and destruction, but nobody knew what the nature of the event, if it actually happened, was – there was no evidence of an earthquake. Now they do. Researchers using seismic reflection techniques have identified a huge lens-shaped deposit of sediment at the bottom of the lake. The new study has revealed that the massive sedimentary deposit resulted from a catastrophic rock-fall at the eastern end of the lake, where the River Rhone flows into it. The event propagated a wave that travelled the length of the lake and was about 42ft (13m) high when it crashed into the location now occupied by Geneva. Its height was magnified by the fact that the lake narrows at its western end. The scary thing is that the research shows Lake Geneva has seen a number of these types of events over time, and it could happen again. *Nature, 28 Oct; National Geographic, 31 Oct 2012.*

A LANDSCAPE ZOO

Robert Benfer of the University of Missouri has made a fascinating discovery just north of Lima, Peru – giant animal-shaped mounds made of soil and rocks spotted while studying satellite images via Google Earth. He visited the mounds and was able to date them to c.2000 BC. His theory is that they were astronomical symbols. *News Bureau, University of Missouri, 28 Mar 2012*.

We can add an observation to this discovery. Benfer notes that the only other significant collection of animal-shaped mounds in the Americas are the effigy mounds of the northern mid-west USA, especially in Iowa, Wisconsin and Ohio. The latter state was the core area of the shamanic Hopewell Indian federation that existed 1,000 years ago, so their earthen effigies are younger than the Peruvian mounds by 2,000-3,000 years. Now, we have already noted (**FT260:20**, **286:24**) that vast geometrical earthworks increasingly being discovered in the Amazon Basin are astoundingly similar to those left behind by the Hopewell peoples. Is it just coincidence, or could remnants of a major former "El Dorado-esque" South American civilisation have migrated thousands of miles north over those intervening millennia? Archæologists will laugh, but their views on the prehistoric Americas have had to be so often revised that such ridicule might be premature.

CLASSICAL CORNER

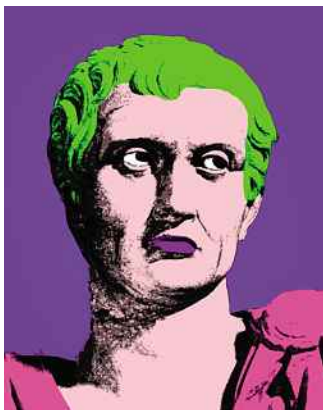
FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

158. THE FAME GAME

(Sorry, Shirley Ellis – never could work out how to play your 'Name Game' back in 1964)

Beyond his Campbell's soup tins, celebrity prints, The Factory, and those largely unwatchable films, stands the classic Andy Warholism: Everybody will be famous for 15 minutes. A prediction that looks more and more likely to be coming true, especially in America where people are famous for being famous.

"The itch for fame is impious." Thus, Valerius Maximus (*Memorable Deeds & Sayings*, bk8 ch14 ext5), one of several (also Aulus Gellius, Cicero, Jerome, Plutarch, Solinus, Strabo) tellers of the tale of Herostratus who on 21 July 356 BC (Alexander's birth date, according to Plutarch's biography, ch3 para6 – perhaps a fabricated coincidence) burned down the Temple of Diana at Ephesus (one of the Seven Wonders of the World) in order to become famous – Mark David Chapman's proclaimed motive for murdering John Lennon.



To deny him (in Mrs Thatcher's phrase) 'the oxygen of publicity', the Ephesians passed a law imposing the death penalty on anyone who mentioned his name. But, the historian Theopompus (in his lost *Hellenika*) blew the gaffe, and Herostratus has achieved fame beyond his wildest dreams: his name in German (*Herostrat*) denotes one who is a criminal from thirst for glory; he inspired a story by Sartre (part of *Le Mur*, 1939) and a homonymous British film (1967); Albert Borowitz's *Terrorism for Self-Glorification: The Herostratus Syndrome* (Kent State Univ., Ohio, 2005) has made him the generic name.

Julius Cæsar won considerably more than 15 minutes, but in other circumstances would have been content with that. According to Plutarch's biography (ch11 para3), he and a companion were riding past a miserable hamlet. When the companion jestingly wondered if there were struggles for power and glory even in such a place, Cæsar replied ("in all seriousness"), "I would rather be first man there than second at Rome."

In 47 BC, Cæsar appointed one Vatinius to be consul for a few days, thus provoking Cicero (famous for his wit, a quality not always appreciated in school Latin classes) to remark "a wonderful year, that consulship, for in it there was neither winter nor spring nor summer nor autumn"; also, when Vatinius complained Cicero had not called on him, "I planned to come in your consulship, but night overtook me" (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, bk2 ch3 para5).

Both went one better in 45. Cæsar appointed Caninius Rebilus consul for a stop-gap few hours on New Year's Eve. Cicero (*Letters to His Friends*, bk7 no30, recycled by Macrobius, bk2 ch3 para6, and the *Augustan History*'s life (ch8 para2) of would-be usurper Trebellius Pollio) cracked that Caninius never slept and no one ate or slept or did anything during his tenure.

Trebellius was one of the *Augustan History*'s supposed 'Thirty Tyrants', i.e. wannabe emperors who mushroomed in AD 260. Several lasted only months, or even days, usually bumped off by the same soldiers who had proclaimed them. One, Marius, is thus (ch8 para2) described: "Proclaimed on day one, ruled on day two, murdered on day three" – a Roman Solomon Grundy.

Another, the boy Victorinus, was made joint-emperor with his incumbent father, both slain the next morning. No shortage of ephemeral kiddies in our story. Leo II (in the many Byzantine sources) was proclaimed emperor in 474 at age seven; he crowned his father Zeno as co-ruler; then died after one year and – wait for it, forteans – 23 days.

Still, he was luckier than France's John I, proclaimed King *in utero*, born King on 15 November 1316, expired five days later. God, though, famously moves in mysterious ways, his wonders/blunders to perform. Another uterine monarch was Persia's Shapur II, who emerged to reign 70 years.

Some of these elements combine with Nero and Poppæa. She gave birth to a daughter in AD 63, rapturously greeted by hubbie; the infant died at four months, just as extravagantly mourned; the Senate proclaimed her a goddess; soon forgotten (Tacitus, *Annals*, bk15 ch23). A few years later (Suetonius, ch35 para2), the again-pregnant Poppæa was killed by Nero booting her *in utero* when she nagged him for coming home late from the chariot races – a classical 'domestic'.

"Fame – I'm gonna live forever" – Irene Cara

NECROLOG

This month, we say goodbye to the man at the centre of the archæological mystery known as the 'Dorak affair' and the founder of a controversial new religious movement

JAMES MELLAART

Jimmy Mellaart played a prominent part in the discovery and excavation of two of world's oldest known cities at Hacilar (1957-60) and Çatalhöyük (1961-63) in Turkey. These Neolithic settlements contained not only the earliest textiles and pottery ever found up to that time, but also (according to Mellaart), the earliest murals – as distinct from cave art – which he said depicted erupting volcanoes, scenes of men sowing and tending livestock (the earliest evidence of cattle domestication), and formalised patterns of animals, birds and human figures in which Mallaart detected the origins of the Turkish kilim. However, the very existence of the Çatalhöyük paintings was questioned when he asserted that they were impossible to remove or preserve. They were damaged, he said, and had been impossible to photograph before they crumbled to plaster dust. Mellaart's hurried sketches were not made public for 25 years, when they only added to the debate.

Odder still was the Dorak affair, which dogged Mellaart's career [**FT256:58**]. In the Fifties, he was working for the British Institute of Archæology in Ankara and living with his Turkish wife Arlette and their infant son. According to Mellaart, in 1958 (or possibly six years earlier – reports differ) he was on a train to the Turkish port of Izmir when a young woman entered and sat opposite him. He noticed she wore a gold bracelet, reminiscent of those found at Troy. They got talking. She was 20 or 21, and spoke English with an American accent. She said her name was Anna Papastrati and that she had many things like the bracelet at her house in Izmir, which she invited him to come and see. He spent four days at her house, 217 Kazim Dirik Street, sketching the objects and taking rubbings. He had no camera and Anna had forbidden him to hire a photographer.

There were gold and silver bracelets, a sceptre, a golden cup, ceremonial axes and a fabulous collection of bronze and silver figurines, including a goddess cupping her breasts. Accompanying notes suggested the artefacts had been excavated in a village called Dorak by Greek archæologists during the Turko-Greek War (1919-22). They came from two royal tombs of the Yortans, neighbours of the Trojans. There were fragments of a gold sheet with Egyptian hieroglyphics bearing the name of Pharaoh Sahure, who ruled from 2487 to 2473 BC, and a "silver sword of state" decorated with seagoing ships. From these pieces Mellaart deduced that a major seafaring nation existed in northwest Anatolia, adjacent to Troy, who were possibly the biblical "people of the sea".

When Mellaart's drawings were published in the *Illustrated London News* (29 Nov 1959), touted as "the most important discovery since the royal tombs of Ur", a Turkish paper accused him of having robbed the tombs himself. A search for the young woman proved fruitless. The name Anna Papastrati was unknown and her address didn't exist. There was no record of anyone called Papastrati living in Izmir since about 1912. In May 1962 the Turkish paper *Milleyet* announced that Mellaart was part of a plot to smuggle £48 million-worth of Dorak "national treasures" out of Turkey. A criminal case was brought against him, but was dropped in a general amnesty in 1965; Turkey's Department of Antiquities nonetheless cancelled his licence to excavate. In 1964, he took an appointment to lecture in Anatolian archæology at the University of London, where he remained until 1991.

Some experts have suggested that the mysterious 'Anna' was a honey-trap working for a gang of dealers seeking authentication for their treasure from a respected archæologist before selling it to a wealthy collector; but none of the Dorak artefacts has ever surfaced. American journalist Suzan Mazur recently noticed that a letter allegedly from Anna, giving Mellaart permission to publish his drawings, bore a single remarkable resemblance to letters typed in the same period by Mellaart's wife Arlette: the figure '1' in the date was written using a capital I. In 2005 the Scottish archæologist Professor David Stronach, who dug with Mellaart at Hacilar, said that Mellaart had invented the whole story, calling it a "dreamlike episode". But why? Besides the drawings, Mellaart had made thousands of pages of notes. Michael Balter, who investigated the Dorak affair, concluded: "Unless the treasure shows up one day, the mystery is likely to remain unsolved."

James Mellaart, archæologist, born London 14 Nov 1925; died 29 July 2012, aged 86.

YOUN JAE-WOOK / GETTY IMAGES

SUN MYUNG MOON

The founder of the Unification Church, popularly known as "the Moonies", claimed to have had a supernatural visitation at the age of 16. On Easter Sunday 1936, Jesus appeared and told him that God had chosen him to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Over the next nine years, Moon wrestled with the Devil and received revelations from God as well as conversing with Moses, Muhammad, Jesus, Confucius, and Buddha. There are parallels with the story of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, whose First Vision also occurred during adolescence. As with Smith and Muhammad, Moon's revelations were preserved in a holy book – in his case *The Divine Principle* (1957). The Fall of Man followed Eve's seduction by Satan and the illicit sexual relations she had with Adam before receiving God's blessing. Their offspring were tainted by Satan's influence and though God sent Jesus to restore a pure family on Earth, he was executed before being able to marry and have children.

Moon's mission was to establish a "true family" untouched by Satan while teaching people to lead God-centred lives under his leadership. His second wife, Hak Ja Han, bore him 14 children, who were known within the Church as the "true family" to distinguish them from the Church's much larger family created by conversions and mass weddings between strangers chosen by Moon from photographs. Moon entered the *Guinness Book of Records* in 1988 when he united 6,516 couples at Seoul's Olympic Stadium. The Church's theology is highly original: Moon's God suffered desperately from human waywardness; Moon's mission was to mend God's broken heart, to act as His devoted child and healer. Everyone should aspire to moral perfection in order to alleviate divine misery.

Under the Japanese occupation of Korea, Moon was arrested and tortured as a suspected communist. After 1945, Korea was swept by religious fervour, and an estimated 70 messiahs

preached their particular paths to Heaven. Moon preached his gospel in Pyongyang, North Korea, but the communists jailed and tortured him for 'spreading falsehoods' and deceiving innocent people for their money; he was released by UN forces in October 1950 during the Korean War. He established the Tong-il Kyo (the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity) in 1954 – but, disillusioned with the idea of building the Kingdom of God in a divided Korea, he decided (like Joseph Smith) that the Second Israel must be America, so he moved there in 1971.

Some US officials regarded his Church as a front for the Korean CIA; Moon was certainly an ardent cold warrior and a supporter of right-wing causes. He believed North Korea had fallen under the rule of Satan (personified by Kim Il-Sung) and that communism was spawn of the Devil. The Unification Church, however, was not a 'front' for anything, but a straightforward millennial movement. At its height, it claimed up to five million members in 120 countries, but some observers reckon the membership was nearer 50,000. Accusations of 'brain-washing' fell flat; there was no evidence that the Moonies held anyone against their will or used mild-altering drugs.

Moon used his Church's wealth to create a multinational business empire in Asia and the Americas, comprising a vast range of products, from ginseng and titanium production, to weapons, hotels, hospitals, fishing fleets, golf courses and even a ballet company. The empire's media interests, apart from newspapers in Argentina, Greece, Japan and Uruguay, include UPI (the United Press International news agency), The *New York City Tribune* and the *Washington Times* (President Reagan's paper of choice). In 1982, however, Moon's connections couldn't save him from a charge of tax evasion, for which he spent 13 months in a US jail in 1984-85. In 2008 he handed over the running of the Church to his youngest son, Harvard-educated Hyung Jin Moon, born in 1979.

Mun Yong-myeong (later Sun Myung Moon), founder of the Unification Church, born Pieyong-An, Korea 6 Jan 1920; died from pneumonia, Gapyeong, South Korea 3 Sept 2012, aged 92.

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Terry Vance Garner, 70, went to feed his pigs on his farm at Riverton, near the coast of Oregon, on 26 September, but never returned. Several hours later, a relative found his dentures and pieces of his body in the pig enclosure, but the pigs had consumed the rest of his remains. It is thought he might have suffered a heart attack or other medical emergency; or maybe he had been knocked over – one of the pigs had previously bitten him. The animals were estimated by the authorities to weigh around 700lb (320kg). *[AP, PA] BBC News, 2 Oct; D.Mail, 3 Oct 2012.*

Firemen had to search a house in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, for three days to find the body of a compulsive hoarder. Linda Parkes (59) died from smoke inhalation in a fire that started when piles of rubbish fell onto a flame on the cooker hob. "We had to crawl through the top of doorways to get into the rooms," the fire brigade manager told the Derby inquest. "The living room was a solid mass, you'd just be crawling and your back would be touching the ceiling. In the kitchen, the mass was about 5ft [1.5m] deep. There were rubbish bags, human excrement in carrier bags, rotting floors and rodent droppings." Ms Parkes's body was eventually discovered under 3ft (90cm) of debris. *D.Mirror, Sun, 31 Mar 2012.*

A father of three killed his wife with an axe after she forced him to sleep in the garden shed for 48 years. Kurt Bayer, 75, allegedly told wife Sieglinde: "That will shut your moaning up." His cousin Rolf called Sieglinde, 75, "an old bag". He said: "I never saw her once being nice to Kurt." Bayer, who has dementia, was sent to a psychiatric clinic in Michelau, Germany. *Sun, 3 May 2012.*

Kumari Basnet, 16, was killed after being buried under a landslide in a cowshed, where she had been confined while menstruating. The tragedy happened in a remote village in Jajarkot district of Nepal's far west. In a local tradition called chaupadi, girls are forbidden to visit temples or enter the house during their periods and are made to sleep in outhouses. *MX News (Sydney), 14 Sept 2012.*

A driver's airbag saved him from injury – but he died after breathing noxious fumes when the bag burst. Ronald Smith, 59, began to complain of breathing problems almost immediately after the crash in Hartlepool, Co Durham, on 12 November 2010, when his Vauxhall Insignia was involved in a six-car shunt. A shard of glass pierced the bag and he inhaled the gases it contained along with a large amount of white powder. The fit marine engineer died from bronchial pneumonia and pulmonary fibrosis two months later. An inquest in May 2012 recorded a verdict of death by misadventure. The AA said it had no record of any similar deaths. *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, Sun, 29 May 2012.*

Fitness enthusiast Christopher Bailey, 28, was crushed to death under his barbell when he tried to lift weights after a drinking session on 18/19 May. The bakery worker was found on a training bench in his garage in Portslade, East Sussex, by his landlord Oliver Steer, with the 40kg (88lb) bar across his neck. He had been drinking Jack Daniels with Mr Steer and another tenant until 3am. A post mortem examination showed he was three and a half times over the drink-drive limit and had died from compression of the neck. *Sun, 22 May; D.Telegraph, Guardian, 5 Sept 2012.*

A chopped-up torso was found near the ruins of Castle Frankenstein near Darmstadt in Germany. A late night rambler picked up a toe, thinking it was a mushroom, then a sack full of body parts, except the head and legs. "This was no bid to create a monster, but a grim crime," said a policeman. *Sun 17 Sept 2012.*

A Thai gardener died after swallowing a live centipede. Wansadej Kongkul, 39, a grounds keeper at a high school in Khon Kaen City, ate the insect on 17 September after it bit him on the finger while he was cutting grass. "His friend said Wansadej asked him for some water to clean the centipede off, then popped it in his mouth," said a local police officer. "After 20 minutes, Wansadej threw up, so his friend made him lie down in a shed. When he came back in two hours, Wansadej was dead." Both men had been drinking alcohol before the incident. Some Thais believe centipedes have medicinal value. *Adelaide Advertiser, 19 Sept 2012.*

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FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

UFOLOGY: DEAD OR ALIVE?

In the very first edition of Flyingsaucery (**FT170:24**, April 2003) we tried to answer the vexed question of whether our subject was "dead or alive". Almost a decade has passed and it's Groundhog Day again: a special "summit on the future of ufology" was held at the University of Worcester on 17 November. Organised by the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP), a panel of speakers asked if there is anything to be gained from rehashing the same old cases over and over and, if not, whether the subject really is in terminal decline.

Most seasoned observers will agree the numbers of significant "high strangeness" UFO events have declined in the past decade as the debate has become increasingly focused upon the twin myths of "saucer crashes" and "alien abductions". Meanwhile, the closure of many long-standing UFO magazines and groups that once provided a platform for discussions on a range of alternatives to the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) has reduced the subject's internal pluralism. In its place, whole UFO communities have migrated online, where discourse has grown increasingly polarised and extreme. Ufologists have always been obsessed with government cover-ups, but the influence of conspiracy theories and the arrival of Exopolitics have taken these ideas into more alarming directions.

One beacon of light is the venerable British UFO Research Association (BUFORA), which held its 50th anniversary conference in London in September. According to founder member Lionel Beer, it was "standing room only" at the association's first conference in 1962, when the subject was fresh and exciting. Membership may have dwindled since then, but, according to FT contributor and blogger Andrew May, most of the British ufologists who attended were less single-mindedly fixated on the ETH than their American counterparts. Officially, BUFORA styles its approach as "scientifically factual", and lectures included references to "political, cultural and social influences" on UFO reporting. Investigations chief Heather Dixon pointed out that 95 per cent of the 500-plus sightings received each year have rational explanations. But in a perceptive feature, BBC journalist Jon Kelly noted that scientific ufology was its own worst enemy, as the rank and file membership don't want to hear about misperceptions and IFOs: "Questions from the floor tend to concern whether they think a spacecraft landed at Rendlesham Forest or if the American government is covering something up at Area 51." Is ufology dead or alive? We predict ASSAP may be posing the same question in 2022!

ASSAP conference details: http://www.assap.ac.uk/SU/index.html; BBC News Magazine 25 September: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19702652; Andrew May on 50 years of British UFO research: http://forteana-blog.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/fifty-years-of-british-ufo-research.html

LEON NEAL / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

UFO GEEK SAGA NEARS AN END

The saga of Gary McKinnon (pictured above; see **FT283:28** for last update) is slowly drawing to a close. The north London UFO buff (Solo was his Internet name) was arrested in 2002 for hacking into 97 computers in the US over a period of 13 months. Many of the computers he hacked belonged to the Pentagon, US Army, US Navy and NASA. Since his arrest, a US federal grand jury indicted him on eight counts of cyber-crimes, which, if he was convicted, could have led to 60 years in an American high security jail. His American prosecutors painted McKinnon as a devious Bond-style villain who sought to crack the digital secrets of the military industrial complex. Somewhat disingenuously, although he'd been arrested in 2002, the US waited until after a new extradition treaty was ratified in 2004 before submitting an extradition request. Unable to challenge the substance of the case, only the extradition itself, McKinnon and his supporters – among them the likes of Sting and Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour – mounted a spirited defence which resulted in a lost High Court hearing in 2008.

Meanwhile, McKinnon was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. As the story unfolded it became abundantly clear to all who took even the slightest interest in the case that he was nothing more than a UFO and computer nerd who shared the widely held belief that the American military have knowledge about UFOs and aliens they are withholding from the general public. His computer skills and his beliefs allowed him to wander far into US cyberspace in the hunt for perhaps a photo of a UFO or a document that would prove the truth was in there. The mitigating circumstances cut no ice with how the British government intended to treat him. (Then) Home Secretary Alan Johnson insisted on the "importance of honouring extradition arrangements" with the US and for a time McKinnon's fate appeared sealed. At the last General Election, McKinnon's case had become a hot political issue, with both Nick Clegg and David Cameron calling for a review of the extradition system. The upshot of all this was that, on 16 October, Tory Home Secretary Theresa May – who earlier in the month had called for the Human Rights Act to be scrapped – announced that Gary would not, after all, face extradition for trial to the US as this would be a breach of his human rights. This development may still lead to him being tried and convicted in the UK but he no longer has the threat of being dealt with by a hostile legal system far from his family and friends. It's something of an irony that the beliefs and fantasies of a UFO buff may lead directly to a change in the UK law on extradition. Indeed, it may be the only politically useful thing ufology has achieved, albeit by accident rather than intent.
http://freegary.org.uk/

JENNY RANDLES WONDERS WHETHER A DEARTH OF CAR STOP CASES HAS SOMETHING TO TELL US

WHERE HAVE ALL THE CAR STOPS GONE?

Remember the scene in Spielberg's classic movie – *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – where the engine and lights of the pick-up truck fail just as the UFO appears overhead? This wasn't invented just to scare audiences – it reproduced a type of sighting that has been reported since the 1940s and became especially prevalent from 1957 onward.

Known as 'vehicle interference' cases or 'car stops', it was quickly recognised that these were of huge importance – because they revealed the physics behind a UFO encounter. BUFORA researcher Geoff Falla created the first collection of cases in the UK in 1979 and CUFOS added a US set in 1981. This September, Falla updated his work at a conference in London and BUFORA has also released his research as a DVD available from their website (Bufora.org.uk). Though pricey at £30, this is a useful searchable database summarising 700 cases.

However, there is a puzzle. What has happened to more recent cases? One interesting example occurred on a lonely road in Sargent, Texas, on 5 July 2005, when a woman's Volvo suddenly lost both lights and engine in the presence of a large blue ball with translucent edges. But cases of this calibre are now quite rare. Can such a fundamental change in the behaviour of the phenomenon tell us something about the UFO mystery?

A typical case that I investigated reveals its features. It involved three people driving on a touring holiday in Scotland on 8 October 1981. Passing through the Salen Forest on the Isle of Mull in the middle of a sunny day, the American driver slowed down to view the scenery when a dark mist appeared out of nowhere and began to surround their hire car. The vehicle vibrated as the mist hovered over it and the occupants felt a heavy pressure from above. It was possible to see vague lighter patches inside the mist at close proximity. But then, in an instant, as the driver ducked below the windscreen in fear, it vanished. However, the car engine would not turn over until, after a few minutes, he succeeded in starting and they sped away. The electric clock in the car ceased working at the moment the strange mist struck, as did the digital watches worn by the two Americans. But the wind-up watch worn by the British woman was unaffected.

Some kind of energy field appears to have caused these electrical impedence effects and the physiological sensations reported, indicating changes in the atmosphere around the car. Moreover, the metal body of the car may have been a factor in why this force homed in on them. Similar details recur over and over in such cases.

One of the first scientists to probe the subject was James McCampbell of the Westinghouse Electric Company, who sought to establish a viable mechanism by which car

A kind of energy field seems to have caused the effects

engines and lights could fail in the presence of a UFO. He designed a physical model and hypothesised that the UFO was creating a strong ionising field around the metal body of the car. This triggered radio interference (often the first symptom reported), then the engine starting to falter (noticed, perhaps as shaking or vibrating). When the process by which a spark crosses the gap in the ignition system breaks down due to the ionised field, then power is lost. When the UFO disappears and atmospheric conditions return to normal, the charge in the ignition can flow and the car should eventually restart.

Moreover, the ionising radiation would predictably result in physiological sensations described by witnesses. Most common are: unusual heat levels (enough to damage clothing, create sunburn-like effects on skin and evaporate surface water from the outside of the vehicle); a pressure from above and hair-on-end sensation (also noted when a thunderstorm is on top of you, because of similar changes in the local atmosphere); and resulting effects on eyes (watering, redness or migraine-like pains). All regularly occur during car stop cases.

Interestingly, daylight observations of the UFOs in these events often involve misty oval shapes, whereas at night these appear to glow. I have also noted that in dry conditions they can be coloured white or blue, whereas if there is moisture around this alters to orange/red. Water vapour in the air is known to similarly effect colour perception of lightning.

Of course, lightning is a violent, rapid discharge and these car-stopping UFOs are more stable and last up to several minutes. However, one interesting case was reported by meteorologist Terence Meaden in *Weather* magazine (No 48, 1993). It occurred on 20 July 1992 in Valognes, France, where two occupants of a Citroen were driving in heavy rain. Suddenly, the engine failed and they rolled to a halt. just as a huge flash lit up the car and a massive lightning strike hit the ground just two metres behind. After recovering from the shock they got out and checked the engine, but nothing was amiss and the vehicle then started normally. While this was a lightning discharge, not a UFO, it's easy to conclude that the build-up of ionising charge that led to the strike impeded the car in much the same way theorised by McCampbell with UFOs.

But why might there be a tail-off in car stop cases? There are possible clues. Firstly, there has been a change in the type of spark plug being used in engines. As cars have become more dependent on computer systems, resistance-type plugs have come to replace the older spark plug. These minimise leaking discharge effects on the surrounding sensitive systems but might fortuitously prevent sparks from earthing into the metal body of the car in the presence of an ionising UFO field.

Moreover, although most cars are still produced out of metal, such as steel, the use of plastic and carbon fibre for components or body shells is increasing and will grow as strength and safety improves and the costs equalise. If UFOs are being attracted to cars because they offer the conductive charge of a metal object on an isolated road, then anything that minimises that factor – such as less conductive materials – could restrict how often the UFOs can trigger typical car stop effects.

Of course, a UFO having an associated energy field that ionises the local atmosphere does not preclude it being a constructed device (like an alien spaceship), but it could, more plausibly, be a naturally occurring atmospheric phenomenon. Indeed, if the presence of isolated metal car bodies is a factor and the fall-off in cases continues when body composition changes, then this would support a UAP as cause. Aliens would presumably have control over the motion of their craft, whereas UAP behaviour would depend solely on natural forces.

So, the apparent fall in car stop cases could be hard evidence that these UFOs are not extraterrestrial in origin, but an unidentified atmospheric phenomenon.

50 SHADES OF GREY

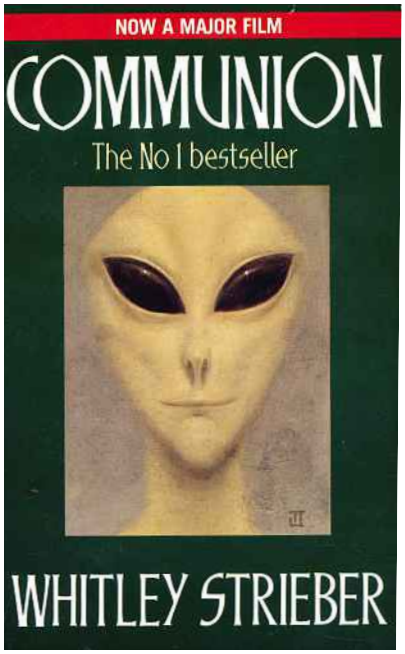
From alien abductions to extraterrestrial S&M, **PETER BROOKESMITH** looks back at the hidden history of jolly – and not so jolly – rogers with the alien sex pirates

The history of alien abductions is replete with gruesome tales of grisly (and gristly) sex with aliens. This unfortunate encounter has became (in)famous:

There were clothes strewn about, and two of the stocky ones drew my legs apart. The next thing I knew I was being shown an enormous and extremely ugly object, grey and scaly, with a sort of network of wires on the end. It was at least a foot long, narrow, and triangular in structure. They inserted the thing into my rectum. It seemed to swarm into me as if it had a life of its own. Apparently, its purpose was to take samples, possibly of fecal matter, but at the same time I had the impression I was being raped and for the first time I felt anger.

Thus Whitley Strieber, in *Communion* (Arrow 1988, p30). His best-selling account made abduction synonymous with being rectally reamed, in popular culture – to the extent that when snatched by aliens, Homer Simpson promptly offered up his rear with the remark that they "might as well get it over with." ('Treehouse of Horror VII', 1998) If you think there is something weird going on here, you'd be right, but Whitley Strieber was by no means the first to report something of the kind.

It's a long-overlooked fact that the *de facto* 'world's first' abduction featured just such a nasty. In 1965, Walter N Webb wrote the first detailed account [1] of Betty and Barney Hill's 1961 abduction, reporting how Barney, once alert aboard the alien craft, opened his eyes for a quick peek at his surroundings and saw that he was standing before a table in a clean, wedge-shaped "operating room" which was illuminated with a pale blue light... He closed his eyes again. After he was placed on the table, his shoes were taken off and his pants pulled down slightly.



"I WAS SHOWN AN ENORMOUS AND EXTREMELY UGLY OBJECT"

He felt a cup-like device placed around his genitals and believed a sperm specimen was somehow withdrawn. His left arm was scraped for skin cells, and his ears and throat were checked. He was rolled over on his stomach. A cylindrical object was inserted up the rectum, and once again the witness believed something was extracted.

Dr Benjamin Simon, the Hills' hypnotherapist and a Freudian, thought this indicated latent homosexuality on Barney's part (p15). A simpler explanation might be that most blokes don't like being humiliated, and being anally raped – the precise nature of that 'cylindrical object' is not clear – is as humiliating as humiliation gets. Perhaps especially for a heterosexual black man in the United States of the early Sixties. Nor is this the kind of thing anyone would merrily relate to mates at work of a Monday morning, even if one had learned about it only under hypnosis. Hence Webb's insistence in his report that these aspects of Barney Hill's experience remain confidential.

A MONSTROUS REGIMENT

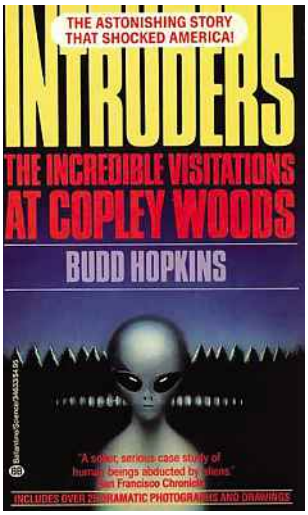
It's one thing for apparently gender-free Greys to assault their male victims with more-or-less mechanical objects. Superficially at least, things become more problematic when apparently female aliens set about men. The classic case is

ABOVE: Abductees Betty and Barney Hill. Barney believed a device was fitted over his genitals and a sperm sample taken from him during the experience. The dog, thankfully, was unmolested.

another very early one. In October 1957 Brazilian farmer Antonio Villas Boas was hauled aboard a landed UFO, medically examined and then, after a long wait, confronted by a shapely, naked, blue-eyed blonde, one of whose striking features was blood-red pubic hair. Villas Boas may have thought this detail might make the girl seem more 'alien', but more realistically it demonstrates his lack of acquaintance with any great variety of naked blondes. In any case, she promptly seduced him. The lusty 23-year-old went two rounds –and possibly three, for years later he claimed she took and kept a sperm sample *after* their second bout. Her obvious charms (and his eagerness) were somewhat dispelled, since "some of the growls that came from her at certain times nearly spoiled everything, as they gave the disagreeable impression of lying with an animal," as he put it. Another sign of sexual innocence?

This isn't exactly kinky sex, then, but the abduction literature isn't short on spacenapped men being 'forced' to have sex with alien females. Among the odder, and more obscure, instances are Arizonan – and former cowpoke – John Williams's encounters with two MIB-like characters. [2] In December 1975, a man and woman came into Williams's leather shop. Both had yellow eyes, and their skin "looked transparent and beneath it a second milky-white layer. The faces, however, were bronze. The woman was about 5ft 7in (1.7m) and stocky, with short legs. Somehow the three of them ended up in a back room. Then the woman "pulls out a device that she runs over his body. It resembles a hand held massager. It renders him helpless to resist her. She undresses and moves up close. Looking into her eyes, he sees them enlarging and bubbling like boiling water, then he feels swallowed up by them. 'I could feel the sexual contact and could see a million miles into time… I saw the crumbling and rebuilding of civilizations, both at the same time…'"

About six months later, the pair turned up again. All Williams initially recalled of this visit was their being in the shop doorway, then that they were leaving. His shirt was unbuttoned and his Levi's were undone. An hour and 20 minutes had gone by. Under hypnosis, Williams was able to recall that the woman was entirely hairless (she wore a wig on her head), and had small, perfectly round breasts with white nipples. Her yellow eyes featured concentric circles. She exuded a smell that fixated Williams on the idea of sex. No need for a magic massager this time, then. There are several other strange details to the case, but to adapt Kottmeyer's comment, "We already have enough to get a fair reading on the perv-o-meter, so perhaps it doesn't matter."



A common element between Villas Boas's and Williams's and other accounts of men being seduced-cum-raped by aliens is that one way or another the men are, or are made, powerless to resist the blandishments of the lady aliens. The kind of savage assault associated with male-on-female or male-on-male rape doesn't occur. Male abductees often express surprise or bafflement that they can be made to perform in such circumstances. One suspects here that abductees (and/or their interviewers or hypnotists) are themselves victims of the folkloric notion that 'men can't be raped' – that is, they can't be forced into having an erection, let alone an orgasm. Not so. Granted, some stimulation is necessary to produce a male erection, but the reaction is autonomic.[3] Somewhat less widely known is that fear or panic can produce an erection in men. This is presumably how the drug-dispensing, gun-toting women behind a long (2009–12) spate of rapes of male hitch-hikers in Zimbabwe have been able to operate. [4]

All of which must surely be traumatic for victims, but victims of aliens often seem to come in for worse. In *Intruders* (Ballantine 1988, pp198–202), Budd Hopkins reports the case of 'Ed Duvall', whom he hypnotised in January 1986. When abducted in the early Sixties, Duvall had a Barney Hill-type "suction device" placed on his penis and a sperm sample was taken. This procedure was very painful. Ed apparently did not have an erection, and there was no spontaneous ejaculation… and after a few moments the small, grey figures returned and took a second sample. Ed begged them not to do it, his pain and humiliation movingly evident. His captors did virtually nothing to ease his suffering, and even returned for a third sample. "They take what they want when they want it, regardless of anything," he said. "They don't seem to care how we feel."

On a later occasion, while Duvall was naked on a table, he was approached by a female alien (or possibly hybrid) who "wasn't unattractive", was "well endowed – she definitely had mammaries", and "absolutely no hair. She didn't have pubic hair either"; and had a narrow chin. She "rode" Duvall until he had an orgasm, then left the room, whereupon two smaller Greys "took little spoons and scraped the leftover semen off my penis and took it in a sample in a bottle and kept it." [5]

The irony – or perhaps the significance – of Duvall's case is that he was sterile: two years previously, he'd had a vasectomy. Asked if he thought the aliens knew that, he "answered instantly. 'They knew before they put me out.'" So the aliens' purpose was what, besides demonstrating power through humiliation and degradation, like any human dominatrix? Perhaps it would make more sense to ask whence these aliens sprang. Did they partly, perchance, inhabit an alternative universe going *Bang!* in the mind of Budd Hopkins? One says 'partly' because there may be more than one parallel with Bruce Smith's experience, which was based on a series of vivid dreams and deep meditation, beginning in late 1989. Martin Kottmeyer's summary reads:

Bruce Smith has dreams of sex with female Greys that are tall and wearing long black wigs with straight bangs like a crazy Suzy Wong character from the Sixties. One mounts him, straddling his loins, and grins with "somewhere between pleasure and maniacal torture". He does not remember having sex, or ejaculating, "or even if she had a vagina." Over time he wrestles with fears of whether they took sperm, his passion, or his ability to ejaculate. He expresses the concern [that] his impotence expresses "the ET suctioning off my sexual energies." He eventually understands he is father to 34 or so hybrids… [6]

I LIKE IT LIKE THAT

Smith says in his manuscript that he had "always felt a lot of sexually-based guilt," but not everyone feels that way about their closer alien encounters. Ilsa von Bulow [7] reported that she had been abducted by Greys who, unlike the weedy neuters of tradition, had "incredible boners, about a foot long", whose tips "oozed green and had star-like French ticklers that flickered on and off like Xmas lights." When abducted, she is soon naked on a lab table. A device is put on her head and various degrees of porno are tested on her, with the images settling into her [seeing herself] in a writhing pile of groaning lesbians which juices her up. A probe enters her vagina and another enters her butthole. She hears dolphin screeches and her legs are spread and an incredible sensation of a sparkler going off inside her pushes her to orgasms. Some of them would make her black out. This has happened several times and she always feels sore afterwards. She accepts them as they are.

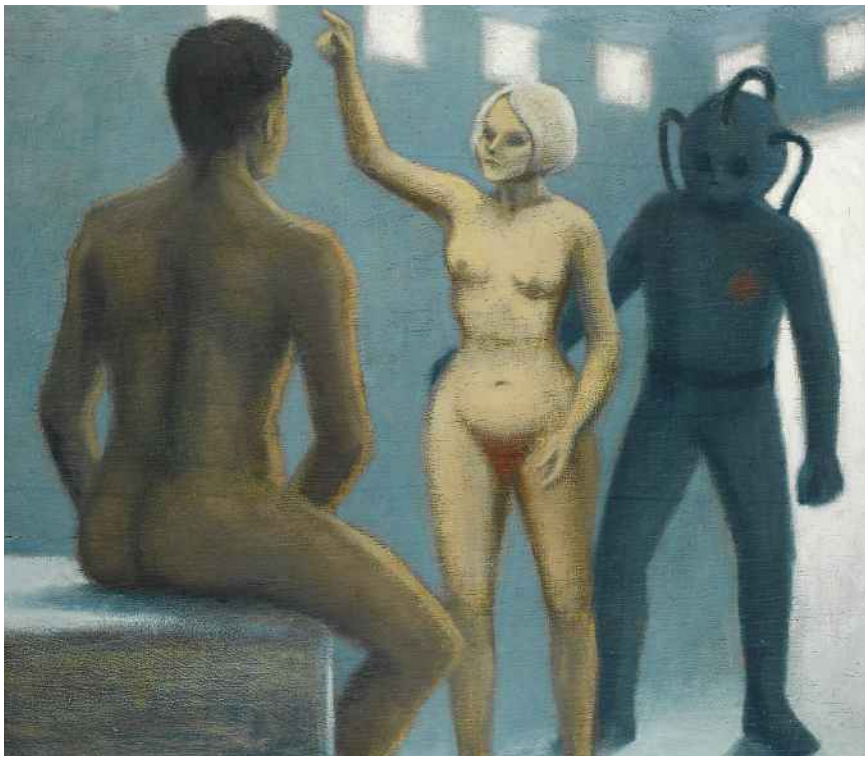
"It's like it's all part of some experiment to understand more about how our sex drive works," said von Bulow matter-of-factly. "Either that or they are just horndogs."

Few would want to put up with this kind of thing, nonetheless, even for the sake of regular ecstatic blackouts. Likewise, few would take the pleasure jazz singer Pamela Stonebrooke would appear to have in her sexual encounters with a 6ft (1.8m) reptilian alien. She told the *Sun* that: "My first sexual encounter... was so intense and enjoyable and, without wanting to get too graphic, he was so much larger than most men... I awoke from my sleep to find myself making love to what appeared to be a Greek god... But the sex was very intense... The next time I opened my eyes he had transformed into a reptilian entity with scaly, snake-like skin. It was then I realised I was making love to a shape-shifting alien. Sensing I was scared, the reptile whispered, 'We've always been together, we love each other.' The orgasms were intense. When I tell men about my reptilian experience, they find it difficult."

"I WAS MAKING LOVE TO A SHAPE-SHIFTING REPTILE ALIEN"

As they might. Women too, probably. Ms Stonebrooke now appears to consider that these encounters take place on the astral plane (although she also claims to have four hybrid daughters). "As for sex on the astral, it is not physically localised... The astounding experience of the higher astral planes are perceived as somewhat orgasmic only because that is the only way we have of describing that incredibly profoundly ecstatic state of being." [8] So perhaps she didn't quite have sex with a reptile after all – not exactly. And besides, she enjoyed it. That makes her unusual.

Almost any 'alien abduction' conducted according to the standard formulæ developed by the likes of Budd Hopkins and David Jacobs can be framed as humiliating, often degrading, and certainly undignified, even without the sexual components (such as



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

TOP: Alien females can be quite dominant. **ABOVE LEFT:** Antonio Villas Boas faces a naked alien blonde. **ABOVE RIGHT:** An anal probe – now on sale in your Earth stores.

rape in all its forms, men being obliged to have sex with other male abductees, and various intimate probes and proddings). It's possible to make a convincing, and damning, argument that – insofar as abduction narratives are iatrogenic, and hypnotised 'witnesses' are powerless at the hands of investigators – these stories reflect the uncouth preoccupations of the researchers in question. And this may be true, but perhaps only up to a point.

STARTING AS YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO GO ON

The October 1973 [9] case of 'Gabriella Versacci' (also known in the literature as Mrs Verona and Mrs V) comes to mind. She was driving at around 11:00pm near Langford Budville, Somerset, when her car went dead. Getting out to investigate, she's pushed to the ground by a robot, and she faints. She comes round, sees a weird craft, faints again, and comes round inside a circular room, naked and strapped to a table. A 'medical' exam follows, which oddly includes having a suction apparatus placed against her groin. Then a man [*sic*] enters, gazes at her spreadeagled parts "without visible emotion", and presses a pin-like device against her thigh. This semi-paralyses her. He rapes her. Again she faints. She wakes, fully clothed, next to her car, which starts without trouble. Gabriella Versacci was never hypnotised; her report is all her own.

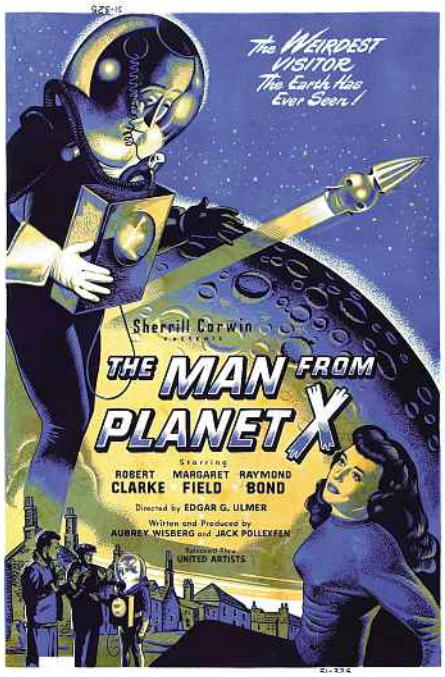
Who knows what generated Gabriella Versacci's account – a fantasy, her own psychopathology, a hoax, a need to make an actual rape psychologically acceptable (she did have a pregnancy test, which proved negative)? But it's *interesting*, to say the least, that as early as 1973 (or 1977) in the history of the phenomenon, she should choose for her story the frame of alien abduction, which at the time was something of a specialist interest. Leaving aside the sexual element, the Versacci case and its strange aftermath indicate at least that even uncontaminated 'abductees' *themselves* are inclined to present as *victims*. This disposition may then open the way to exploitation by investigators who do use hypnosis and have a salacious interest not only in predatory sex but in forwarding interpretive agendas of their own. This scenario will result in intensifying the subjects' sense of victimhood; it may open them up to hitherto unexplored, unrecognised or unadmitted areas of their own sexuality.

The investigators' ethics and motives in all this are clearly questionable, but the nub here is that they may not be manipulating or exposing anything not already latent in their subjects. But the traffic between hypnotist and subject is two-way. Patrick Harpur long ago [10] pointed out the parallel between an abduction experience and being examined by an investigator-hypnotist, which can be paraphrased as follows: first, you enter a state – hypnotic trance – somewhere between sleep and waking, in another reality, where anything is possible. You lie submissively on a couch, your mind is read by a powerful being, and you give up sometimes embarrassing intimate details about your physical history, habits or proclivities, all in the interests of disinterested, dispassionate investigation. You are reassured by the hypnotist that all is well really. He lets you go, and you find that although it seems only a few minutes have passed, you have been in a trance for a couple of hours. That an investigator may unconsciously take on the rôle of 'the alien' in developing an abduction narrative may be less obvious to those such as artists and historians who promote themselves as abductologists than it is to those psychologists steeped in the professional literature.

In a blistering contribution [11] to the debate over the troubling relationship between Dr David Jacobs and 'abductee' Emma Woods, former private investigator and legal researcher Gary Haden quotes Dr Michael J Diamond on the problem of the hypnotist who illegitimately enters, all unaware, into the world of his subject, a phenomenon known as counter-transference:

"The transference may, of course, be strengthened," Diamond writes, "by an individual's 'unconscious mythical beliefs' concerning hypnotism resulting in intense preformed transferences for both subject

LEFT: Singer Pamela Stonebrooke had sex with a shape-shifting alien: "When I tell men about my reptilian experience, they find it difficult".



SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS OF SPACE...
A HORRIFIC NIGHTMARE
IS ABOUT TO BECOME A REALITY.
INSEMINOID
...A FAR FROM HUMAN BIRTH!
SIR RUN RUN SHAW presents INSEMINOID A Jupiter Film Production.

ABOVE: The intimate link between alien invasion and sexual intrusion, whether conscious or not, has never been lost on the producers of B-movies. The slightly reptilian and splendidly-named *Purple Monster's* gun and crotch are at the same level as his female victim's mouth, while the *Man from Planet X* shoots a rocket from his genital area over the head of a submissive sex kitten. *Inseminoid* both mobilises alien vaginal panic and suggests the progeny of such unnatural congress will not be pretty,

WE BRING YOU PAIN

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL SEX AND VIOLENCE AMONG THE HYBRIDS AND HYPNOTISTS

Dr David Jacobs, along with the late Budd Hopkins, was among the first abduction 'researchers' to suggest that the Greys were intent on interbreeding with humans. He floated the idea in *Secret Life* (1993) [1] and in *The Threat* (1998) expanded it to suggest that, within five or 50 years, the resulting 'hybrid' progeny would take control of Earth. By way of evidence Dr Jacobs produced a dazzling array of biological nonsense, psychological illiteracy, and bad logic. [2] Sceptics have always suspected that the escalation of abduction lore over the years has been the product of both the febrile imaginations of investigators and commercial interest. Transcripts of sessions with abductees under hypnosis in *Secret Life* made it clear that Jacobs was unwittingly (or not) leading his subjects into saying what he most wanted to hear. A QC confirmed this opinion to me.

Secret Life also demonstrated Dr Jacobs's interest in all things alienly sexual and specifically in cruel and unusual sex. He tells us, for instance: "A young girl is taken on board a UFO occupied by strange-looking creatures. She is stripped naked and cannot physically resist... Her genitals are probed and manipulated. By the time she has reached 16 years old, she might already have had a number of traumatic internal examinations that have been stored in her unconscious mind... young boys and girls sometimes see naked adults being examined... Children watch as the aliens perform procedures on sometimes-erect male genitals... Adults are powerless. Only the aliens have power, and the children are wholly and totally dependent on them." (pp251–2)

"Some men and women who are psychologically accustomed to frequent violation, pain mixed with 'pleasure', and the inability to move on a table, report fantasies involving masochism and bondage." (p253)

This scenario matches the cognitive dissociation of masochism, as described by Newman and Baumeister, [3] with the creepy extra spice that the investigator is ostensibly eliciting it from powerless (hypnotised) people, unavoidably becoming a voyeur in the process. If Jacobs is *inducing* this kind of thing in people, then we're witnessing something immoral, grotesque, and professionally unethical.

What had been a widely-held suspicion became a public controversy in 2008 when Emma Woods (pseudonym) began posting details of her experience of Dr Jacobs's investigatory techniques on her website (www.alienabductee.com). Hers seemed to be more than just allegations: everything Ms Woods has to say appears to be backed up by audio clips from the 37 long hypnosis sessions (involving 91 hypnotic regressions) with Jacobs that took place between December 2004 and February 2007. We can thus compare general and specific charges against Jacobs and his methods with directly documented evidence.

1. JACOBS ALREADY KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS TO HEAR.

This is related to the belief that he (and other investigators) have sought ever more sensational 'data' within the abduction phenomenon, to ensure healthy book sales. Working with Emma Woods and two or three other subjects, Jacobs had been concentrating on the activities of human-alien hybrids and their distasteful (and often senseless) terrestrial behaviour. [4]

GERARD GOFFAUX

Dr Jacobs: ...everything you have said is fairly routine for me. When people are inaccurate, they tend to say things that I have never heard before or since. Or, they veer off logic and chronology... When you did recount alien dialogue (a "red flag" area of danger) your description of what was told to you was exactly what other abductees have indicated. [72.1.4]

2. JACOBS ENSURES HE GETS THE 'DATA' HE WANTS BY WAY OF LEADING QUESTIONS.

The Emma Woods recordings show that things are worse than that. While Ms Woods was *in hypnotic trance* Jacobs offered numerous suggestions as to what had happened to her, sometimes not even bothering to frame his interest as questions. In the following instance, note the non-committal responses.

Dr Jacobs: This is a difficult question. And while you're lying there, and you're saying this, "I just want to be normal", can you think back to other incidents within the previous three years when something like this [having sex with my boyfriend] might have happened to you, with them [hybrids], or – ?

Woods: Um.

Dr Jacobs: In other words, is that why they're saying this, or – ?

Woods: Yeah.

Dr Jacobs: What I'm asking ultimately is do you remember sexual relations that happened to you when you were younger which is why they were saying, "Stick with us, not with him"?

Woods: Yeah.

Dr Jacobs: Now you have to understand that any...

Woods: I think so, yeah.

Dr Jacobs: Right. Now I don't want to put that in your mind, of course, but if you're saying that – when you're – the frame of reference that you're discussing this with them – like you're saying, "No, I want to be normal." Does this relate to events that happened on board the object beforehand?

Woods: Yeah. I have a sort of a feeling that – that – um – maybe that – that – um – that kind of human-looking person, or somebody, or – had...

Dr Jacobs: I see. So there's more of a relationship with him than – perhaps maybe in the...

Woods: Maybe.

Dr Jacobs: In the past? ... Because you did talk [on another occasion] about how, you know, when you were 13 years old, you noticed that something was – that the hymen – your hymen was missing, and there was no particular reason for it that you could remember.

Woods: Yeah.

Dr Jacobs: And, then the question then is, was this – was this because of sexual relations, or was this because of a procedure that went on that caused it that was not a sexual event, or was it because of some accidental thing that happened just in your normal life?

Woods: I think I did have – I think I – I think I did have sex with him before. I kind of remember it.

Dr Jacobs: I see. Okay. [75.2.1]

3. JACOBS APPROACH TO HIS SUBJECTS IS UNETHICAL.

At some point, apparently, Jacobs had become convinced that the hybrids were out to get him – maybe even kill him – because of what he had discovered about them, and which *they* had discovered by reading the minds of his subjects. This bit of egocentric melodrama would obviously add zing to the book he was (he told Ms Woods) preparing to write on the new hybrid threat. As Ms Woods recounts it: "Consequently, while Dr Jacobs had me under hypnosis, he planted suggestions in my mind that I had Multiple Personality Disorder... Dr Jacobs ostensibly believed that the 'hybrids/aliens' would read my mind, see that he had a new theory 'that everyone telling abduction stories was actually suffering from MPD', and that the 'hybrids/aliens' would therefore lose interest in him... Dr Jacobs did not ask my permission before he put the suggestions in my mind that I had MPD, and I did not know that he was going to do it."

Within a few weeks, during another session, Jacobs made a post-hypnotic suggestion calculated to ensure that Ms Woods forgot Jacobs had planted the idea in her mind.

We don't even have to remark that since Jacobs began unravelling their secrets in 1984, the aliens have been amazingly unconcerned, so far, about stopping the leak. That, or they're too dumb to notice. So why start worrying now?

4. JACOBS IS PRURIENTLY FASCINATED BY SADO-MASOCHISTIC ACTIVITY AND ENCOURAGES ACCOUNTS OF IT IN HIS SUBJECTS.

Emma Woods's transcriptions (in her submission to OHRP) from her sessions with Dr Jacobs contains so many instances of her being fed such ideas before or during actual hypnosis that it's impossible to quote them all. These samples give the flavour (and a nasty taste in the mouth). Note again, in the second sample, Ms Woods's persistently noncommittal responses: "During my 14th hypnosis session, in the discussion before the hypnotic regressions, Dr Jacobs told me that a woman was sexually assaulted by three "hybrids" at once..."

Dr Jacobs: There have been episodes... of pure sexual assault. And, sexual assault from... three

GERARD GOFFAUX

of them at once.

Woods: God.

Dr Jacobs: And... it's absolutely pure sexual assault. Not that she remembered anything the next day. But... the way it was described... you could just tell... these guys didn't care what they did to this woman... Because... she was going to forget anyway. So they could do anything they wanted to her. And they did, you know... And I've heard that from... several people. [188.1]

"While I was hypnotised during [the same] hypnosis session, Dr Jacobs asked me if a "hybrid" had sex with me to "punish" me..."

Dr Jacobs: So... he basically wants to have sex, and he does... Now when – after he's pushed you to the ground, and he's pulled your hair, and he's done this, and he's done that, and then he wants to have sex and all that... is this some sort of a loving situation or is this purely mechanical?

Woods: I don't know. I can't remember. I just remember him standing there and... I can remember him... pulling my top off and that, but I can't really remember anything else...

Dr Jacobs: Okay. Well, what I'm asking is whether he's doing this to punish you, or to satisfy himself. See what I mean?

Woods: Right... I don't know. He wasn't really – when he was standing there he wasn't really – I don't know. I don't know...

Dr Jacobs: So, what happens when the guy is basically done? Does he get dressed again, or – ?

Woods: I'm not sure. I can't remember.

Dr Jacobs: That's okay. In other words, I just want to see what he says. Does he say, well, you know, "That'll teach ya", or does he say, "That was nice, I'll be back", or I mean, you know – does he give some indication of his own state of mind?

Woods: I'm kind of lost now... I don't remember. [190.1]

There seems too to be a certain porousness in the boundary between Jacobs's 'professional' questioning of this subject and his personal sense of good taste and the permissible. His request, *while she was hypnotised* in her 20th session, to send him her unwashed underwear after supposedly having sex with a hybrid is a case in point. And note the emphasis – a post-hypnotic suggestion – on doing so without thinking about it:

Dr Jacobs: Well, if you can dig up the underpants. Without even thinking about it... Just put 'em in a plastic bag. Put 'em in an envelope. And, then just send them off to me.

Woods: Okay.

Dr Jacobs: That would be greatly appreciated. Do not even think about it.

Woods: Right.

Dr Jacobs: Just do it automatically.

Woods: Yeah.

Dr Jacobs: No fuss, no muss.

Woods: Yeah.

Dr Jacobs: And, don't think about it afterwards, either. [423.4]

In her 28th hypnotic session, and while Ms Woods was in trance, Jacobs suggested at some length that he should buy and she should wear a chastity belt of a kind he had seen in a Philadelphia sex shop that "specialised in bondage-dominance", to stop the hybrids having her any time they wanted. "They can't take it off," he explained. "It's got a little lock and a key. And right where the vaginal opening is, it's got a couple of nails sticking across. It's a dead stopper, no doubt about it... And it will probably piss 'em off." [5] But 'pissing off' hybrids, acccording to Jacobean lore, only makes things worse for their victims. Is that what Jacobs wanted?

What, indeed, *did* Jacobs really want, altogether? That question surely now hangs over everything he has extracted by one means or another from his 'abductees'.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1 This was the original US (Simon & Schuster), and UK hardback (Fourth Estate), title; the UK paperback (Virgin 1994) was titled *Alien Encounters*. The pagination is the same in all these editions. Budd Hopkins's revelation of what Jacobs was to call 'the breeding program' came in *Intruders* (1987; Ballantine 1988, p187): "It is unthinkable and unbelievable – yet the evidence points in that direction. An ongoing and systematic breeding experiment must be considered one of the central purposes of UFO abductions."

2 Gloss: *biological nonsense* – the presumption that 'aliens' and human can interbreed and that aliens can steal fœtuses; *psychological illiteracy*: a wilful ignorance over the reconstructive nature of memory and the pitfalls of hypnosis in refreshing it, the possibility of cultural contagion; *bad logic*: ubiquitous in abductionist literature. All these errors were early trashed in *Fortean Times* in a two-part piece (**FT83:12-16, 85:22-24**), an analysis ever after studiously ignored by abductologists and their followers, although supported by many studies before and since.

3 LS Newman and RF Baumeister, "Toward an Explanation of the UFO Abduction Phenomenon: Hypnotic Elaboration, Extraterrestrial Sadomasochism, and Spurious Memories", *Psychological Enquiry* Vol 7 No 2 (1996), pp99 –126.

4 Bracketed numbers following quotations refer to paragraph numbers in Emma Woods, *Details of the Violations of My Protections as a Human Research Subject of Temple University* (2009), a submission to the United States Department of Health & Human Services Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The complaint was rejected because Jacobs's employer, Temple University, defined his work with abductees not as 'research' but as 'taking oral history' and that as such it fell outside OHRP's remit. OHRP accepted Temple's idiosyncratic limitation on this definition of 'research'.

5 Quoted in Matt Graeber, "Veteran Investigator Matt Graeber Interviews Emma Woods, Part II", originally published on the (now defunct) Speculative Realms blog, 6 Jan 2011; available as a PDF at www.ufoalienabductee.com/speculative-realms/graeber-interview-part-2.pdf. Parts I and III of this interview are available from www.ufoalienabductee.com.

and hypnotist long before they meet for hypnosis (citation omitted). These preformed beliefs are typically viewed as pertaining to an omnipotent, benevolent, or sadistic hypnotist and form the basis for what Morris and CW Gardner (1959) termed the 'hypnotic transference neurosis.' Such preformed transferences are ubiquitous in clinical hypnosis and, as Fromm (1984) notes, "tend to be *utilized* rather than *analyzed*." (Emphasis in original.)

The upshot, Haden argues, is that Jacobs hypnotised both Ms Woods *and himself*, and in the process took over the mindset of the 'alien hybrids' whose brutal behaviour he was ostensibly investigating. It's a reasonable inference that other non-professional hypnotists in Dr Jacobs's chosen field of 'oral history' have equally unwittingly done the same. Put crudely, the relationship – as we might have guessed from the rest of this article – then becomes a parallel and a parody of sado-masochistic collaboration. While abductees may begin with a sense of victimhood, specific or generalised, it is the investigator-hypnotist who develops this into its full-blown form. And carries the responsibility for it. If this is a fair analysis, then one can legitimately speculate on the true source of such a generalisations as this, from another abduction investigator: "The aliens themselves crave all our highly charged emotions, especially the two emotions of sex and pain. Of the two, pain is their favorite emotion. Our pain frequencies feed them something they need, so they wish to be assured of the continuing availability of a tremendous amount of human pain." [12]

Odd as it may seem to most, however, sexual humiliation – if only in a fantasy world – may be, for some, a necessary or convenient way of dealing with crushing everyday pressures. The *locus classicus* in which the abduction experience is equated with masochism is LS Newman and RF Baumeister's paper "Toward an Explanation of the UFO Abduction Phenomenon: Hypnotic Elaboration, Extraterrestrial Sadomasochism, and Spurious Memories".[13] They supply almost too much information about masochistic practices and, more interestingly, their psychodynamics, and provide examples of abduction cases in which these occur, as well as a more generalised analysis. Other contributors to the debate didn't wholly concur, although some of their objections betrayed an unsurprising ignorance of the context in which 'abductees' operate. Fifteen years down the line, and knowing what we know now, Newman and Baumeister's identification of abduction accounts that contain strong sexual components with a masochistic outlook looks ever more compelling. But the indications now are that that outlook is most probably shared, if not generated, by abduction investigators. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

PETER BROOKESMITH was the evil mastermind behind legendary partwork *The Unexplained* and has written several books on ufology, including *UFO: The Complete Sightings* (1996) and *Alien Abductions* (1998). He is a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*.

The author would like to thank Gary Haden, Martin S Kottmeyer, Carol Rainey, David Sankey and Emma Woods, for supplying information and source material used in preparing these articles.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1 *A Dramatic UFO Encounter in the White Mountains, New Hampshire: the Hill case—Sept. 19-20, 1961*, pp10–11. Prepared for the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), 30 August 1965. I came upon this paper when researching material for *Encounters at Indian Head* (Peter Brookesmith & Karl T. Pflock, eds, Anomalist Books 2007) in 2000, having failed to get a citable source from Budd Hopkins for Barney's sperm extraction episode. He had heard it in the "early Seventies" from Betty Hill; she had clearly chosen not to elaborate further, as neither he nor his acolyte David Jacobs mentions Barney's rectal probing in any of their books. This tells us something about abductologists' lack of historiographical method, and about why Strieber's account was universally met with horrified mirth. For a discussion of Barney's claim and its probable inspiration, see Martin S Kottmeyer, "Probing Exosemination", *The REALL News*, Vol 10 No 3 (March 2002), pp1, 3–5, 7; online at www.reall.org/newsletter/v10/n03/index.html

2 Summary and quotes are from Martin S Kottmeyer, "Marshmallow Nipples", an unpublished analysis from *Abduction Nitting*, a survey of the 'top fifty' cases as assessed in TE Bullard's *The Measure of a Mystery* (FUFOR 1987). See also B Ann Slate, "The Closest Encounter of the Third Kind", *UFO Report 8*, #4, August 1980, pp37-9 and 77-8, which includes transcripts of hypnosis sessions with Dr W McCall. Williams too produces an echo of AVB, as his demon lover "makes noises. The noises… it's animal… It's… like contented… a moan."

3 For technical details, see RJ Levin and W. van Berlow, "Sexual arousal and orgasm in subjects who experience forced or non-consensual sexual stimulation – a review", *Journal of Clinical and Forensic Medicine* Vol 11 No 2 (April 2004), pp82–8. See also Barbara Krahé, Eva Waizenhöfer and Ingrid Möller, "Women's Sexual Aggression Against Men: Prevalence and Predictors", *Sex Roles* Vol 49 Nos 5/6 (Sept 2003), pp219–232; and O. Rampin, J. Bernabé and F. Giuliano, "Spinal Control of Penile Erection", *World Journal of Urology* Vol 15 No 1 (1997) pp2–13.

4 In November 2011, sisters Sophie Nhokwara, 26, and Netsai Nhokwara, 24, and Rosemary Chakwizira, 24, were arrested in Gweru, Zimbabwe, on charges of aggravated indecent assault after 31 semen-filled condoms were found in their car; the women said they were "just hard-working hookers". Seventeen men identified themselves as victims of such attacks, which began in 2009, but none of their DNA matched that of the semen found. Charges were dropped in May 2012 (**FT289:5**). The attacks, in which small groups of women variously drug or coerce men at gunpoint to have sex with them, continue at the time of writing.

5 AVB's alien seductress also had a narrow pointed chin, which feature happens to be shared by Ed Duvall's alien lover (see below), something not remarked on by Budd Hopkins (or even noticed?) in his account. The lack of pubic hair noted by Duvall and John Williams would be less remarkable in these post-porn days, and (like AVB's lover's bright red bush) may be an unconscious attempt to add exoticism to their predators.

6 Bruce A. Smith, "Fatherhood in the New Age: One Man's Story of Alien Abduction for Cross-Breeding Purposes", manuscript dated June 1, 1990. Reprinted in Commander X, *The Controllers*, Abelard, 1994, pp. 38-45. The summary is quoted from Martin S Kottmeyer, "Ze breeeedink prokramm", privately circulated work in progress. In Smith's MS (p12) the aliens reveal they have 34 million hybrid children in their care. He asks them: "What's so special about the number 34?" They reply: "The numbers 3 and 4 are building block numbers… The number 2 is too universal, and the number 1, is, well, part of everything, so we use 3 and 4." Such is galactic wisdom.

7 Jelly, "'I Had Sex With Aliens' – Alien Abductee Speaks" (interview with Ilsa von Bulow), *While You Were Sleeping*, Issue 12, (n.d., purchased in USA, 15 Jan 2001). Quoted summary from Kottmeyer, *ibid.*

8 See www.crystalinks.com/aliensex.html; Stonebooke's further comment is part of a long rant (her word) at www.greatdreams.com/reptlan/reps.htm

9 See C Barry M King, "Taunton Close Encounters", *BUFORA Journal* Vol 8 No 2 (April 1979), pp. 17-22; *BUFORA Journal* Vol 8 No 3 (June 1979), pp. 18-24; Norman Oliver, "Taunton Abduction Claim – a PS", *BUFORA Journal* Vol 8 No 4 (Sept 1979), pp. 23-24. A rarely repeated feature of the case (investigated in 1977) is the long series of letters, telephone calls and visits from Men in Black who allegedly knew all the details of her experience, in the two *years* that followed the encounter. Signor Versacci said he was present for many of the visits. One would like to know more about the Versaccis – information of a kind ufologists rarely elicit – to put their claims in context. King, in his opening article (8:2, p18), tells us only that "The 'V' family came to England in 1963: they originated from Torino, Italy, both Mr and Mrs V being born there. Mrs V is an ordinary housewife and 37 years of age (report compiled in 1977). Mr V is aged 53, is self-employed and frequently around the house. They have one child, a daughter aged 14. They seem an ordinary family who keep much to themselves. Both have had an ordinary education and neither have any academic or technical qualifications to speak of. They both appear sincere and truthful, albeit nervous… all in all they appeared a nice, honest family, certainly not the type to concoct (or be capable of concocting) a story of this proportion." (Of course not.) Mrs Versacci had apparently spoken about her experience to a number of doctors and psychiatrists, who had dismissed it as 'hallucination'. One would therefore like to know how and why Mrs Versacci made contact with ufologists in the first place.

10 Letter to *Magonia*, No 41 (November 1991), p14.

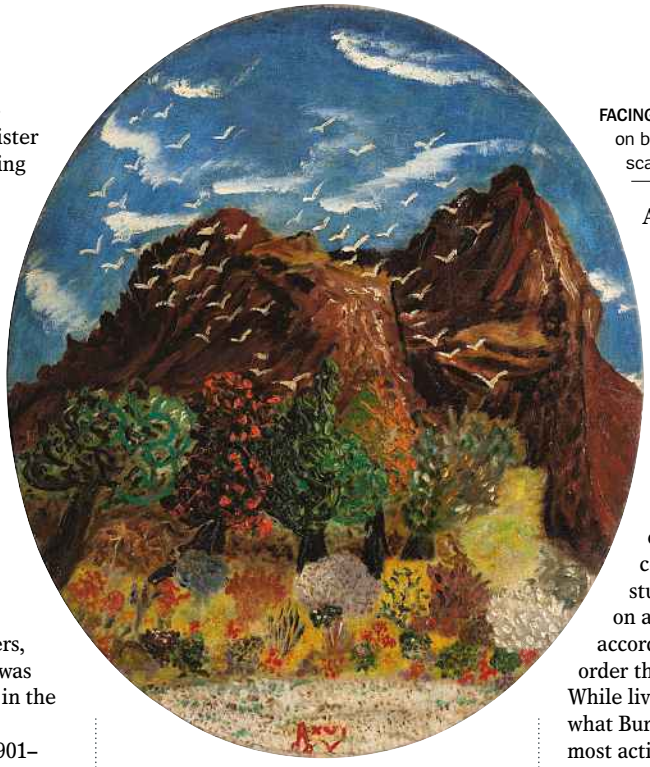
11 Gary Haden, "Counter-Transferential Mirror Trance: Unidentified Flying Object Relations and the Self-Hypnosis of David Jacobs", originally published on the Speculative Realms blog, now available at www.ufoalienabductee.com/speculative-realms/counter-transference.pdf. Haden is quoting MJ Diamond, "The interactional basis of hypnotic experience: On the relational dimensions of hypnosis", *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Vol 35 No 2, pp95-115. The paper is downloadable from: www.drmichaeljdiamond.com/docs/MJD_1987_ionalBasisHypnoticExperience.pdf.

12 Barbara Bartholic, *Barbara: The story of a UFO investigator, as told to Peggy Fielding*, AWOC.com, revised edn 2004, p134. One of Bartholic's subjects comments (p147) of the aliens: "They want to rule. They want to rule. They want power. They want to rule everyone. Everyone. Not just us but other extraterrestrials." Bartholic herself believes (p157) that: "All the people who have come to me, numbering in the hundreds, perhaps thousands, all of them, in my opinion, are in reality alien hybrid human children."

13 *Psychological Enquiry* Vol 7 No 2 (1996), pp99–126.

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S ART FROM THE ABBEY

JACK SARGEANT reports on a new exhibition that puts the Great Beast's Sicilian paintings in the spotlight and suggests that they can help fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of his magical career



FACING PAGE: "The Sun" (Auto Portrait), oil on board, 1920. **LEFT:** "Mountainous Landscape", oil on canvas, 1920.

According to his autohagiographical *Confessions*, Aleister Crowley first began painting in oils while living in New York in 1918.[1] Australian curator Robert Buratti, who is bringing a collection of Crowley works to the antipodes, suggests that Crowley's interest in painting almost certainly predated this. "He would have been experimenting with painting before that. I'd probably argue that his interest and understanding of painting began when he was in Paris. He spent a lot of time with [Auguste] Rodin at his house and writing about his work and seeing him in the studio." Alongside Rodin, Crowley was also in contact with the Symbolist painters, while his brother-in-law at the time was Sir Gerald Kelly, an English painter in the realist tradition.

During Crowley's time in Paris (1901–1904), there was a tension between the Salon painters – those who exhibited at the exhibitions of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and maintained its emphasis on realism and academic painting – and groups such as the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists and Symbolists. Crowley's work bears the influence of some of these movements. While he had no formal training as a painter, his work can still be contextualised within the period of avant-garde ferment in which he worked. Tellingly, following Crowley's 1930 exhibition in Berlin, the avant-garde curator Karl Nierendorf – an early supporter of Expressionists such as Otto Dix – sang the praises of the Great Beast's artistic endeavours.

Already familiar with the art world, Crowley announced a creative move into painting while in the USA, in typical style: "I have been under the misapprehension that I was a great poet. I was clearly mistaken. Paint is my real medium, and I am destined to become one of the outstanding artists of my age."[2] An exhibition in New York garnered some interest, but Crowley moved on, travelling to Cefalu, Sicily. Here he founded the Abbey of Thelema (see **FT231:76-77**) with Leah Hirsig in April 1920, as the new decade dawned. He painted throughout the period, and once the Abbey was established he entered an exceptionally productive period.

THE PAINTINGS WERE ONLY DISCOVERED A FEW YEARS AGO

ART AT THE ABBEY

Based in a small villa, the Abbey Of Thelema was designed to be the centre for a magical community in which people could pursue their esoteric studies, pursuing the Great Work on a programme broadly structured according to that of Crowley's Thelemic order the A:.A:. (Argentium Astrum). While living in Sicily, Crowley entered what Buratti describes as "probably his most active period as a painter. He said in his diaries [that] he was painting nearly every day and travelling back and forth to Paris to buy materials, and he would also go to Palermo and buy materials there."[3] It was during this period that he produced the works collectively referred to as the 'Palermo Collection', currently being exhibited in Perth, Western Australia.

The 13 paintings in the exhibition[4] were originally sold to a local artist and friend of Crowley's, Paola Cicero, four years after his expulsion from Sicily by the authorities. "Leah Hersig and a lot of the other inhabitants of the Abbey stayed on," says Buratti. "She was there until 1927 and then times got too tough. They still had all the stuff in the Abbey. She needed money and sold the paintings to Cicero, who rolled them up and put them in a crate until they were discovered a few years ago and came to the current owners."

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While people may be familiar with Crowley's portraits and self-portraits, the paintings that make up the Palermo Collection include a number of landscapes. Like many of the portraits, these are expressionistic works with vivid colours and painterly brush strokes. Buratti observes that Crowley was "painting the Cefalu coastline and the mountainscapes, but he's not painting what they look like, he's painting what it feels like to be there. He talks about that in his diaries of the time. He's got a unique approach to art. He's trying to capture the will of the subject – the will of himself. His landscapes are definitely worth another look, because people usually gloss straight over them, they say 'Yeah, that's a pretty seascape'. But it's really so much more than that."

Pointing to an untitled piece depicting the Abbey at a foot of a mountain, the waves crashing towards it from the ocean and the sky darkened with storm clouds, Buratti suggests that while some people may now idealise the notion of daily life at Cefalu, it was anything but easy. "There's a great essay by Stephen J King in the exhibition

ABOVE: An untitled landscape, oil on board. **LEFT:** "The Hierophant" (study for tarot card), oil on board, 1921.

catalogue, and he describes the Abbey as a really tough place to be. With Crowley's landscape painting of the Abbey precariously sitting on the precipice of a mountain with these waves coming to destroy it, you get that feeling… it's the perfect example of an expressive landscape, that shows you what it's like to be there, the whole feel of the Abbey and its inhabitants."

While these are interesting works æsthetically, they also offer an insight into the painter's more esoteric concerns. For Buratti, the paintings are "a bit of a visual diary of what Crowley was experiencing in the Abbey. With a lot of the works he was really painting the concepts that he couldn't talk about given his initiatic oaths. And it was an important time for him, quite a testing time, and I think these artworks bear the mark of that. Once he moved to Cefalu he really started to take everything up a notch. I think that's probably where he really started to really refine his visual language. Like anything, the more you paint, the

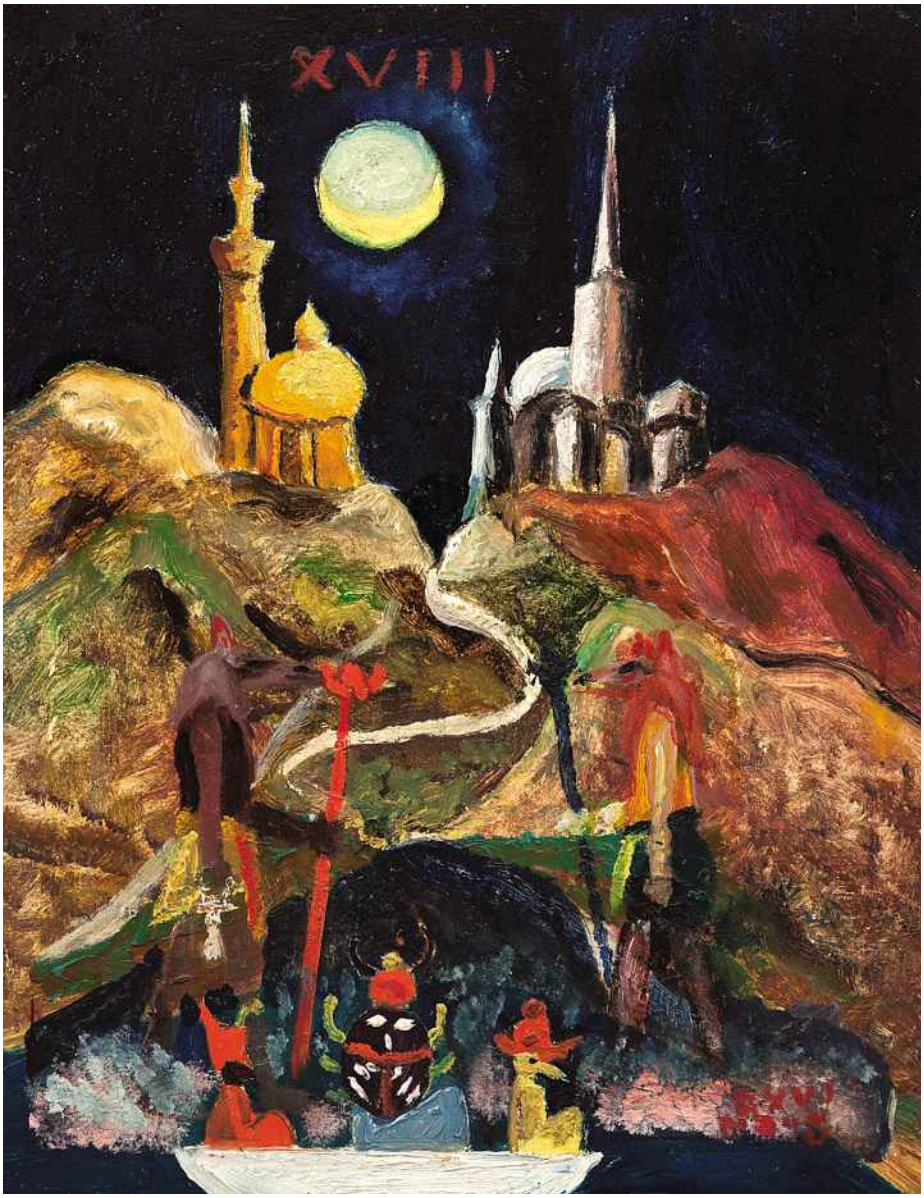
more understanding you develop. At the same time, he was going through the final [grade] of [the] A:.A:., the Ipsissimus, and that was an important time in his magical career. And he was charting a lot of these thoughts, feelings and realisations in these paintings."

An Occult Perspective

The paintings produced during the brief years spent at the Abbey and on show in the exhibition include a trio of works that function as preliminary versions for images that subsequently appeared in the famous Thoth Tarot Deck designed by Crowley and executed by Lady Frieda Harris between 1938 and 1943. These three paintings – 'The Sun', 'The Moon' and 'The Hierophant' – are direct precursors of those included in the deck and offer the viewer the opportunity to see how the concepts and symbols associated with the cards were realised and subsequently adapted by Lady Harris and Crowley nearly two decades later. The opportunity to see these works is a particularly exciting one for those interested in Crowley's magical practice.

Moreover, understood and interpreted as magical works, the paintings take on a more complex meaning. "When he reached the grade of Ipsissimus, Crowley mentions it in his diaries. Normally, he would go into descriptions of his experiences, mention what happened – but he actually wrote nothing. He described it in two words: 'I died.' That's it. He didn't elaborate any further," says Buratti. [5] "But his paintings kept coming and coming. So we don't know what he experienced when he was initiated into that level. We don't know what he was feeling if we are just reading his diaries, but by looking at the paintings I think you start to get some kind of an insight into it. I don't know enough about that [grade] to even guess at what he went through, but there was definitely a sharp turn in his painting and the images that he was putting down around that time. So that's why I think to study that period you really need to be studying the paintings as well as the writings and diaries – everything together. For a long time his art has just been dismissed as a curiosity and nothing that could offer people any new information or insight about him, which I think is crazy. I think that there's so much there that can be learned, particularly from that period."

From an occult perspective these paintings need to be engaged with as thoroughly as the written texts as works that chart the magician's progress. "Overall his aim as a painter was quite different to most other painters of the period," says Buratti. "He was not painting to create a career necessarily – even though obviously he flirted with the idea and would have loved to have been a famous painter. I think that, really, towards the end, his painting was part of his magical practice, it was part of his development, and as a result the technique wasn't as important as the concept. And I don't think he was ever one, certainly when it came to his painting, to be held back by technique. The most important thing for him was being able to express what he wanted to express, and I think he did that. He certainly did it in a different way – but you are talking about an unorthodox person in all things, so it follows that he was going to create unorthodox art." FT



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ABOVE: "The Moon" (study for tarot card), oil on board, 1921.

The Nightmare Paintings: Aleister Crowley *is presented by Buratti Fine Art, opening in West Australia on 30 November and running until 28 February, 2013, then travelling to Sydney in October 2013. There will be a range of events throughout the period including lectures, films and public performance of the Gnostic Mass in each city.*

For further information, visit www.aleistercrowley.com.au or the gallery website at www.buratti.com.au.

The limited edition catalogue will be available from the website and from Weiser Antiquarian.

Author Biography

Alongside writing numerous essays and books on various aspects of underground and outsider culture, **JACK SARGEANT** programmes film festivals and, curates special event screenings, and curates exhibitions. For the last two years he has co-produced monthly lectures on topics ranging from Crowley's erotic poetry to Turkish underground sex comics for the Decadent Society, Sydney.

NOTES

1 *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, Arkana, 1989.

2 Quoted in Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: Revised and Expanded Edition*, North Atlantic Books, 2010, p.331

3 Crowley also painted murals on the window frames, doors and walls of the Abbey, while some of the window frames and doors have been saved by private collectors many of the images on the walls are in a poor state of repair.

4 There were originally 16 works, but three were sold when the collection was exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and as part of the Traces of the Sacred exhibition in Paris in 2008.

5 Robert Buratti forwarded the following reference. "So in that Fire he was consumed wholly, and as pure Spirit alone did he return, little by little, during the months that followed, into the body and mind that had perished in that great ordeal of which he can say no more than this: I died." 'The Master Therion: A Biographical Note', in Aleister Crowley, *The Heart of the Master & Other Papers*, ed. Hymenaeus Beta, OTO & New Falcon, Scottsdale, 1992, p17.

GHOST MOBS

ROGER CLARKE considers the Victorian phenomenon of ghost-hunting flashmobs. What do these public expressions of supernatural interest tell us about the relationship between ghosts and the British class system? Are spirits only the preserve of the lower orders?

They had seen the ghost of Mrs Maria Manning in the window, glimpsed her from the street. She was looking down on them with her dead, murderess eyes. She was wearing the same black dress that had sheathed her for the gallows in November 1849, the same long gloves that protected her manicured hands as she stepped to the hemp in Horsemonger Lane. Gloves were an article of clothing not usually seen in such circumstances, creating quite a frisson for certain Victorian gentlemen. Charles Dickens was horrified by the blood lust of the crowd at this execution, estimated to number between 30-50,000. He was later to immortalise this haughty, deadly Swiss lady's maid as Hortense in Bleak House.

The woman the *Times* dubbed the Lady Macbeth of the Bermondsey stage had now returned post-mortem to Bermondsey. It was a trigger for a phenomenon which, though little known these days, was very common a century ago: the ghost-hunting flashmob. The great show of the trial, followed by the spectacle of her execution, had not sated public desire; Maria Manning had to return for the third act. She had been judged and spat out from Hell, and was now performing as a demon in satin.

And the papers loved the story. As an upper servant, Manning was a woman who had risen above her station, taken on airs and graces, and then been cast low. She was a foreigner, a native of Geneva. She was an adulteress who had killed her lover ("I never liked him and I beat his skull with a ripping chisel"). She had been caught by the use of a modern invention, the telegraph.

Now, after 20 years in the grave, she was back in a house in Bermondsey, looking out on a mob very like the mob that had so thirsted for her death.

Before long, nearly 400 people were gathering outside the house every evening. It wasn't even the house she had lived in, but that didn't matter. At every flicker across the window, every perceived movement in the empty house, the cry went up: "There's the ghost! There's the black ghost!" There was a substantial police intervention. Violence and disorder flared as south London teetered on the brink of summer riots.

"I NEVER LIKED HIM AND I BEAT HIS SKULL IN WITH A CHISEL"

Until Victorian times, ghosts never dressed in black, but changing fashions meant that ghosts changed too. Reports to the Society for Psychical Research show a great upsurge in sightings of female ghosts wearing black clothing in the latter part of the 19th century, perhaps in part due to the Manning case. Susan Hill's novel *The Woman in Black* echoes Maria Manning and her glossy silk corset, which suggests a malignant, coarse evil.

GHOST FLASHMOBS

There was nothing unusual about this substantial mob, growing in number outside a house in the expectation of seeing a ghost. The phenomenon had been seen before in Victorian London, as well as other cities such as Manchester, Hull and Norwich.

People have always wanted to see a good show. Crowds have always gathered outside haunted houses and churchyards in response to rumours. The fascination of the working classes with ghosts has a long history. Richard Baxter, in *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, wrote of the large crowds that gathered outside a house in Lutterworth which was plagued by a stone-throwing ghost in February 1646. And in the Georgian era, the Hammersmith ghost began plaguing west London at the beginning of December 1803. The ghost was said to be the roving

spirit of a man with a cut throat, according to the local newspaper the *Morning Chronicle*. He wore a shroud or, sometimes, an animal skin. Young men sought to conquer their fears. Every evening, groups of them would be seen prowling the area, looking for the ghost, and anyone wearing light clothing could become a target.

A bricklayer, Thomas Milward, wore the apparel traditional to his trade – white linen trousers, a white flannel waistcoat and a white apron. One evening as he was walking home through the dusk, a gentleman and two ladies, alarmed in a passing carriage, shouted: "There goes the ghost!" Milward's robust response to the shrieks was to swear at the carriage and threaten to punch the man's head.

His mother-in-law warned him it was not safe to continue wearing such clothes on his journey home but, stubborn as a mule, Milward went on doing so. As he walked down Black Lion Lane, he was shot dead with a fowling gun by a frightened excise officer named Francis Smith, egged on after a drinking session with local watchman William Girdler in the nearby White Hart pub. They had been exchanging tales about the ghost that had frightened the wife of a locksmith to death, and saying that two others were seriously ill after the shock of another encounter. Smith was imprisoned for murder, but pardoned just a few months later by the king, who seemed to take pity owing to the unusual circumstances.

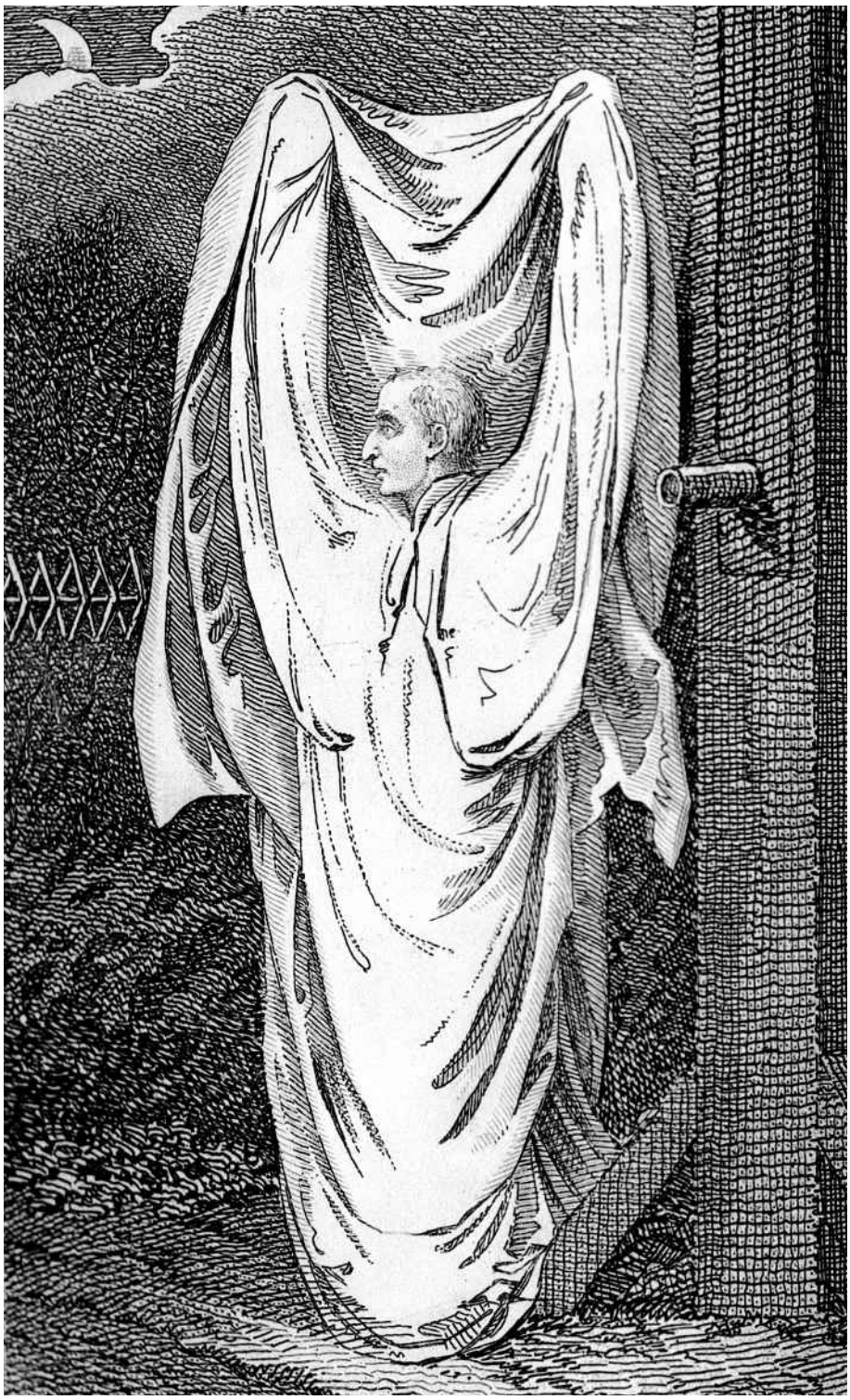
It's difficult to overstate the hysteria that gripped Hammersmith; people roved in armed groups looking for the ghost, and others feared to leave their houses after dark. But a taste for the public ghost scare was growing. In 1821, the military were at the heart of a supposed supernatural incident at a depot in Truro, Cornwall. Stones, apparently thrown by a ghost and consequently smelling of 'brimstone', were hurled, and crowds dutifully turned up to gawp. These flashmobs became regular occurrences in many urban areas, and London, with its vast and sudden rise in population, was the backdrop to most of these popular dramas. At St Andrew's Church in Holborn in August 1815, large crowds gathered to see the ghost that someone thought they had seen there; the *Times* noted with some displeasure that "it required the utmost vigilance of the police to prevent these disgraceful proceedings." In August 1834 in St Giles, a slum area off Holborn, there was a similar ghost scare, again with large crowds; but when several men climbed over the fence and into the graveyard, it wasn't a ghost they found but a bereaved Irish mother guarding her son's grave against the resurrection men.

Ghost mobs were definitely most common in deprived areas. There were at least three major instances in Bermondsey, then a grim area of south London marked by evil-smelling tanneries and dusty calico works. Records of the period show a huge number of impoverished casual workers living there, mostly sleeping five to a room: ghost stories were the soap operas of the age.

In July 1830, an entire police division was tied up in Bermondsey when some 2,000 people gathered every evening outside a house in Grange Road. It had belonged to a clergyman who had recently died; it was supposed to be haunted. The crowd was very unhappy about being moved on by the authorities, some complaining loudly that they had walked for miles to see the ghost.

In Bermondsey again in August 1868, when a body was fished from the Thames and taken to the statutory dead-house beside St James's Church for an inquest to be convened, rumours spread like wildfire that the dead body was up and about and walking the churchyard at night. In consequence, an estimated 2,000 people congregated nightly outside. Efforts by the vicar and parish officials to disperse the crowd were entirely in vain; as the police arrived, one James Jones, aged 19, climbed up onto the railings and shouted at the murmuring, agitated crowd, "Don't go – there it is again – there's the ghost!" He was promptly arrested.

In May 1865, the *Times* reported on 'mobs' that had gathered at 9pm in front of St George's Church in Southwark; they didn't disperse until 4am the following day. The short-tempered police brought in from outside to control the high street and keep it open to traffic arrested a man who kept shouting "Here's the ghost!" Two years later, nine young men were charged with affray and resisting arrest after they were involved in scuffles in Woburn Square; again, the rumour of a



THREE LIONS / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A contemporary engraving of the Hammersmith Ghost. **LEFT:** Maria Manning is arrested in Edinburgh.

ghost was to blame, and the men had been doing the rounds of every door in the square, kicking each one and roughly demanding that the ghost should appear.

This kind of disorder reached its apogee in July 1874 (notice the persistence of those midsummer and Christmas dates) when a rumour went round that a ghost had been seen in the churchyard at Christ Church, on Broadway in Westminster. When some bright spark pinned a ghost made out of paper to a nearby tree, an estimated five to six thousand people a night turned up to see it.

THE VULGARITY OF GHOSTS

Belief in ghosts has always been vulgar. What you think about ghosts and how you perceive them – indeed, how you process that perception – once depended on where you came from, your own profession and the profession of your parents. To some extent, it still does. Since the 1940s, studies have shown that professing a belief in the existence of ghosts has become more socially acceptable; but for most of the last few hundred years, only the upper and lower classes tended to believe in them.

The middle classes have always deplored the idea of ghosts. Professional sceptics are usually drawn from this stratum of society. Your middle-class sceptic would say that toffs like ghosts because it is a symptom of their decadence, the plebeians because they are ill-educated.

The twin polarities of the haunted British landscape make it clear: the haunted pub and the haunted stately home; the poltergeist in the beer cellar and the white lady in the minstrel's gallery. If you were poor, it was because you hoped for the future; and if you were aristocratic and rich, it was because you trusted in the past. The king and queen of British ghosts were Dick Turpin and Anne Boleyn. Dick Turpin haunts as many pubs as Anne Boleyn does palaces and stately homes.

From the late 18th century onwards, the middle classes have taken an increasingly straightforward and sceptical line when it comes to the supernatural, considering a belief in spectres and apparitions to be inherently unhealthy and unhelpful; credulity was a symptom of poor education, infantile, and possibly even something to do with mental illness. Ghosts were, in a nutshell, embarrassing.

In 1934, Ernest Bennett noted, in *Apparitions*: "In some middle-class circles it is generally not considered good form to mention ghosts except in a jocular way; and many devout Christians who anticipate, with some assurance, eternal happiness hereafter, regard any mention of disembodied spirits as an unpleasant and depressing topic."

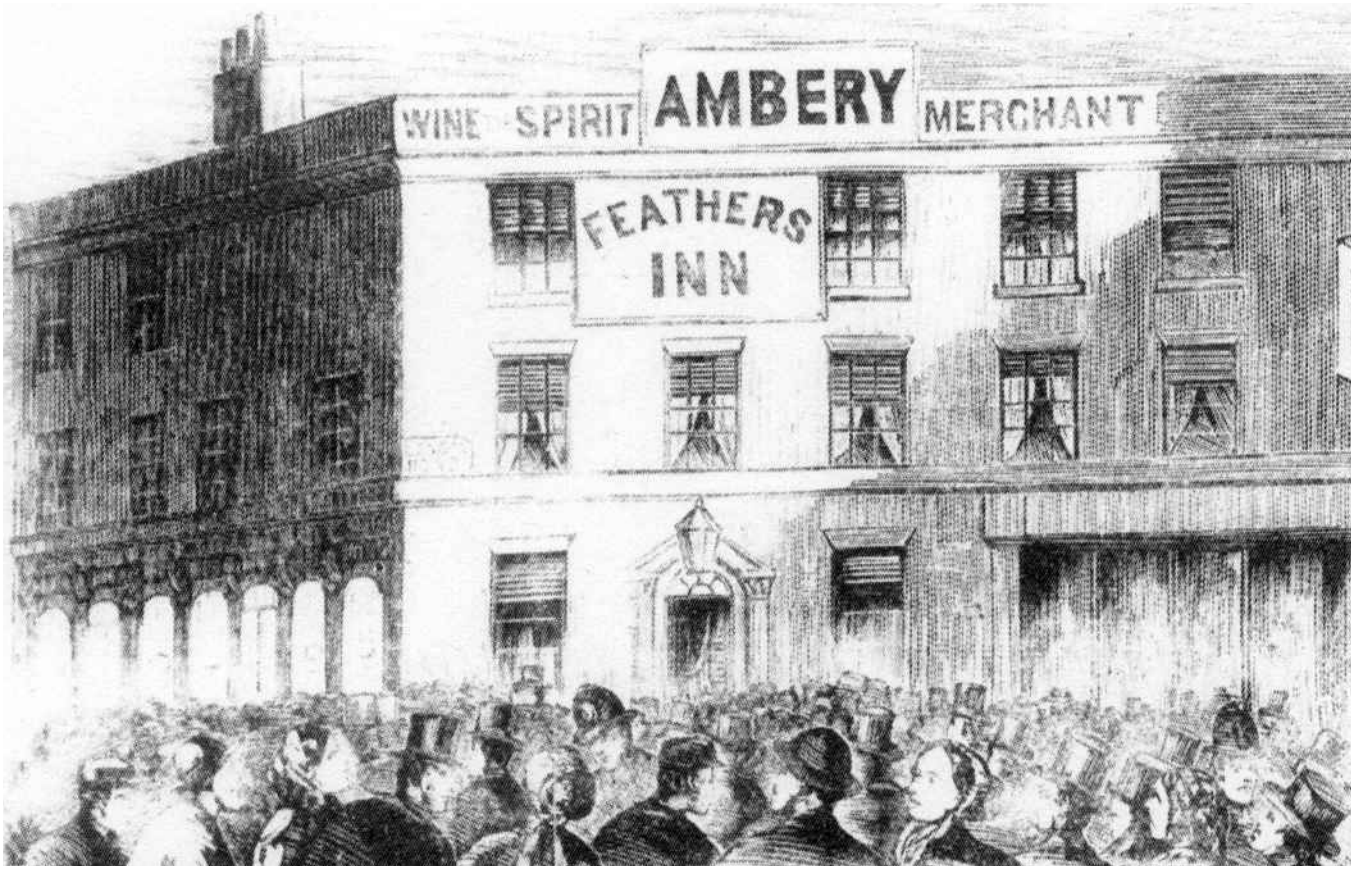
PROFESSIONAL SCEPTICS ARE USUALLY MIDDLE CLASS

Research by the sociologist Geoffrey Gorer in the 1950s showed that there was more of a belief in ghosts among the poor and the upper-middle classes. Things have changed in the multi-media age of the last 60 years. Ghosts have become democratised and classless. But this ancient division of station is still interesting.

The now forgotten novelist and writer Elizabeth Bonhôte (1744–1818) depicted the working classes in a state of superstitious dread, frightened out of their wits and forever jumping at their own shadows. In *The Parental Monitor* (1788) she writes: "After the sun has withdrawn his rays, though the bright beams of the moon illumine their paths, they see an imaginary ghost in every tree, gate or stile."

A few years later, in 1791, a similarly well-meaning Mary Weightman in her *The Friendly Monitor; Or, Dialogues for Youth against the Fear of Ghosts* was preoccupied with banishing "tales of the nursery" from good middle-class homes. Sarah Trimmer and Maria Edgeworth both added their voices to the reform of superstition; they tended to write books imploring parents to keep an eye on the female servants of the household filling their children's heads with nonsense.

So it's all the more interesting that the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, set up in 1881, came from the upper middle classes. The SPR was hugely advanced in many ways and, in others, a complete mirror of its times. One of the principal reasons that Harry Price found himself unable to get very far with it was that



ABOVE: Crowds gather outside the Feathers Inn, Manchester, in 1869, in the hopes of seeing the bell-ringing ghost. The full story will appear in a future issue of *FT*.
FACING PAGE: The "murderess eyes" of Maria Manning stare blankly out from her waxwork effigy at Madame Tussauds.

Eleanor Sidgwick described him as "not quite a gentleman".

The SPR was always minded to suspect fraud, especially by the lower orders, who were always drawn to mischief. When the SPR was first set up and began gathering evidence of the supernatural, it would not take accounts of hauntings and paranormal events from servants; servants, it was thought, were credulous and, on occasion, capable of outright malice. One of the founding members of the SPR noted at a meeting in November 1889 that he preferred the evidence of educated to "that of uneducated persons". And in the SPR *Proceedings* of 1885 there's a discussion of how servants were widely perceived as susceptible to local tales of ghosts, murders and hauntings. The resultant disconnect between the folkloric reality of oral tradition and the hard-nosed investigation of psychic phenomena is with us to this day. You're either in one camp or the other.

SPIRITS, SEX AND SCANDALS

Within the middle classes it became a commonplace that tales of ghosts and hauntings were used to cover up nefarious activities among the rowdy lower orders; sometimes, this was true.

In Pimlico in 1823, a stone-throwing poltergeist on Queen Street was thought to be a servant girl, Maria Herbert, though a lack of hard evidence saw her acquitted. In 1825 a mischievous servant, Anne Page, was sent to jail for her role in smashing windows in Newington, at the time blamed on a ghost by the locals. In 1878, a young servant girl was prosecuted for a staged haunting on a farm in Somerset which involved crockery being moved around, straw ricks set on fire and a pig trough mysteriously moving to the front door of the Goathurst farmhouse. A servant in Maidstone in 1859 shook doors and rang doorbells in her employer's house in order to cover up a secondary career as a prostitute. In Tottenham Court Road in 1839, a pawnbroker found himself the victim of a haunting hoax when a maid devised inventive ways of letting her flesh-and-blood lover into the house at night, and called it a haunting.

The journalist Charles Mackay, author of *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841), tells of a similar scenario in Stockwell in 1772. It's a story usually referred to as 'The Stockwell poltergeist.'

Mrs Golding, an elderly lady, lived alone with her servant, Anne Robinson, near Vauxhall. Around Christmas time, the most amazing events began to take place: "cups and saucers rattled down chimneys," writes Mackay, "pots and pans were whirled downstairs, or through the windows; and hams, cheese and loaves of bread disported themselves on the floor as if the devil were in them." Mrs Golding fought the fiend with the help of her neighbours but, if anything, the haunting got worse, with chairs and tables moving, and the china dashed to smithereens. The devastation stopped only when Anne Robinson was dismissed from service; she later confessed to a local vicar that she had orchestrated the whole thing. As with the

girl from Tottenham Court Road, Anne had engineered the haunting to facilitate her meetings with her boyfriend.

The taint of fraud and criminality has always been in the foreground of the pointed middle-class distaste for the supernatural. Some aristocrats warm to their ancestral ghosts, but the higher-minded will always disapprove of them as vulgar.

FOR ENTERTAINMENT ONLY

There's been little in the way of academic research into the class structure of ghost-belief. In recent years, popular tabloid newspapers in the UK have gradually lost the tone of disapproval they were obliged to rehearse in more Reithian times, though many of the stories they run are pretty much identical to the ones known to the Victorians.

Ghosts remain reliable tabloid fodder, especially in times of economic unease. In January 2009, for example, the *Sun* put a ghost on its front page. "Haunted Hospital Calls in Exorcist," it claimed, revealing how shift workers had seen a black-cloaked ghost, thought to be a Roman soldier, in Derby's newly built City General Hospital. In earlier times, a newspaper would have put in a call to the Society for Psychical Research. They'd send along a photographer and, at some point, a reporter, but they would still defer to this essentially sceptical and science-based organisation.

Nowadays, the primacy of programmes such as *Most Haunted* and *Most Haunted Live* can be seen as a return to the Victorian flashmob. Of course, now, you don't have to turn up outside a church or an empty, broken-windowed house – you can watch it live or monitor the locked-off cameras on the live web-feed. *Most Haunted's* tendency to whip up a pleasurable sensation of fear while at the same time remaining fairly ambivalent about the reality of the phenomena is significant. No explanations or analysis are ever offered – only stories, stories about people now dead, stories about their lives. Following a critical report from industry watchdog Ofcom in 2006, *Most Haunted* now begins with a disclaimer stating that it is for 'entertainment purposes only'. It has quietly dropped any attempt to present itself as genuinely investigative, instead focusing on sentiment, reducing its resident parapsychologist Ciarán O'Keeffe, a distinguished man in his field, to assessing the happenings from a cool sociological standpoint.

And since there are few more middle-class professions than that of the critic or the scientist, both of them by nature enforcers of sceptical positions, the voices raised against such shows always have the vinegar tang of those 18th-century tracts complaining about working-class superstition.

The gentry and aristocracy, however, seem only too happy to lend out their stately homes to groups of local enthusiasts for ghost-hunting, thrilled that people will actually pay hard cash to be haunted; in the faded bedroom where previously no one would sleep, the wicked earl murders an infant nightly and a long-dead aunt brushes her long hair, still growing in the grave. As Noël Coward pertly mentioned in his comedic song 'The Stately Homes of England', it is commerce that has been the great coming-together of the classes over the supernatural in modern times. Owners both of large, crumbling houses and of old pubs flag up their haunted rooms as something entirely desirable. Ghosts remain, however, in essence, vulgar. FT

Extracted from *A Natural History of Ghosts: 500 Years of Hunting for Proof* by Roger Clarke, published by Particular Books at £20.
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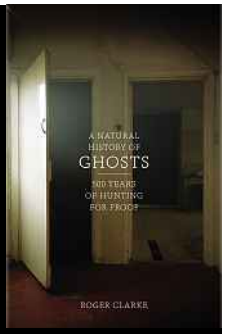
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROGER CLARKE grew up in haunted houses and in 1981 became the youngest person ever to be invited to join the SPR. He was a writer and reviewer for the *Sunday Times*, *Observer* and *Evening Standard* and film editor for *The Big Issue*. Today, he is a columnist on the *Independent* and stands on the Awards Committee of the Critics Circle. He is also the author of *Story of the Scene* (2009).

To order *A Natural History of Ghosts* at the special offer price of £16 including free p&p (RRP £20) please call the Penguin Bookshop on 08430 600021, quoting "NHOG/FT" and ISBN 9781846143335. The offer is subject to availability, and open to UK residents only. Customers should allow up to 14 days for delivery.



ROBERT E HOWARD
THE LOST CELT

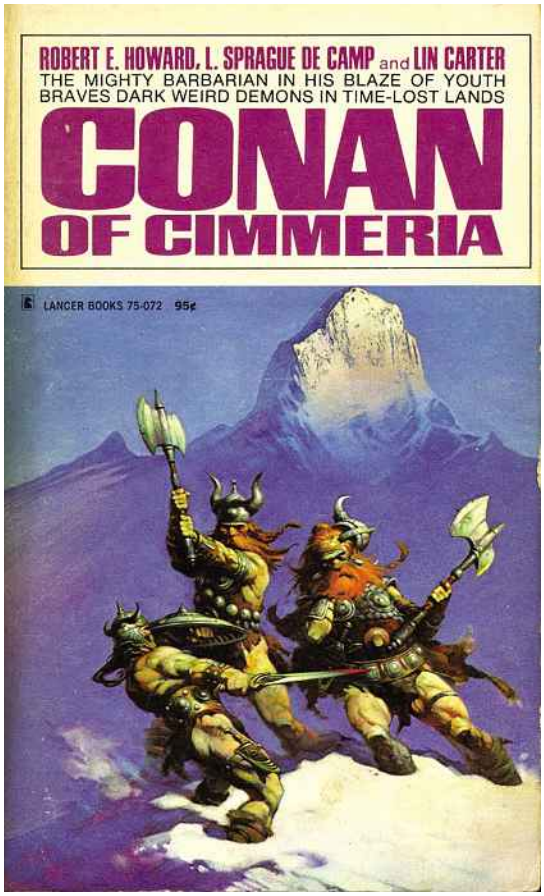
The first ever Conan story was published 80 years ago, in December 1932, and the mighty barbarian hero has maintained his hold on the popular imagination ever since. ANGELINE B ADAMS and REMCO VAN STRATEN explore his creator's Texan background and reveal how a changing world of frontier medicine, oil booms and tall tales gave birth to the genre of Sword and Sorcery.

"Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jewelled thrones of the Earth under his sandaled feet."

With these words, Texan writer Robert E Howard introduced his most famous hero to readers of the now legendary pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, 80 years ago. It would be hard to find someone who has not heard of Conan, be it through the comics, films or paperback books. They'll know he's a barbarian who battles wizards and monsters and that he has mighty thews – though not necessarily what thews are.

But if they've heard of Robert E Howard at all, chances are they'll have the notion that he was a paranoid, gun-toting, redneck savant who locked himself up at night to type the stories dictated by his ghostly barbarian muse. They also know that he had a weird relationship with his mother and killed himself when she died. Until quite recently there wasn't much decent biographical information available, and this led to a distorted picture of the man who, seemingly out of nowhere, created the genre of Sword and Sorcery.

The truth, as always, is more prosaic than the myth – but also far more interesting. To really understand Robert E Howard, you have to know where he came from; and then you begin to see how his fantastic fiction could have been born in the rural Texas of the early 20th century.


ROBERT E. HOWARD, L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP and LIN CARTER
THE MIGHTY BARBARIAN IN HIS BLAZE OF YOUTH
BRAVES DARK WEIRD DEMONS IN TIME-LOST LANDS
CONAN
OF CIMMERIA
LANCER BOOKS 75-072 95¢

OPPOSITE: An undated photo of Robert E Howard, creator of Conan.

A FRONTIER IN TRANSITION

Before the Howards settled down in Cross Plains in 1919, they'd wandered all over Texas. Isaac Howard was a doctor who chased the various oil, cattle, land and railroad booms. He practised frontier medicine, a heady mix of practicality and experiment, always trying to stay at the forefront of medical developments. He may have bought into quack schemes, but also used revolutionary techniques such as hypnosis, and read books on yoga and Eastern mysticism. Later, when his son looked for inspiration for one of his occult stories, he didn't have to go any further than his father's study. [1]

Easy to get along with, extremely capable, if a bit rough around the edges, Isaac Howard was the sort of man who thrived in the West. The Texans of that time saw their society in transition; old-timers still remembered the battles with the Native Americans, and the Mexican civil war was just a decade behind them. Predominantly agricultural communities found themselves overrun by industry and, whenever oil was found, an influx of transient workers. Not getting any younger, with a wife in poor health and a teenage son, Isaac hoped to get settled in Cross Plains before it hit a boom and all the other speculators arrived. His gamble paid off.

Robert's mother, Hester Ervin, was from Irish stock, one of 16 children from her father's two marriages. She'd had a hard life taking care of siblings with TB, contracting the disease herself in the process. In his correspondence, Robert described how the Ervins, a "race of wanderers", conquered the West in the mid-19th century; but while the basic facts of this personal myth check out, Hester must have improved on reality: she was a

ABOVE: The eight-year-old Robert; with parents Hester and Isaac; a teenage REH poses in boxing gloves outside his house. **BELOW:** Cross Plains, Texas, in the 1920s.

proud woman, and a degrading existence of starvation and hardship offered few heroic tales to pass on to her son.

She seemed destined to be an 'old maid', until she met Isaac Howard in 1904, when she was 34 and he 32. They married, as much for practicality as for love: it offered her an escape and him a travelling companion and helper. They didn't expect any children, and that suited them well; Isaac was busy with his practice, she in the early stages of TB, and they were constantly on the road. Then, Hester conceived, and miraculously – pregnancy was dangerous at the best of times – she and her son both survived. Somehow, the birth certificate lists Robert's birthday as 24 (instead of 22) January 1906, and reduces his mother's age by five years. It was the first, but not the last, time that the facts surrounding Robert E Howard would be uncertain.

LEGENDS OF THE CELTS

Wherever they went, Isaac found plenty of work. As he was often away from home, Hester and her only child became dependent on one another's company, and a strong bond formed between them. Robert was a precocious child and, having learned to read at the age of two, devoured the works of Stevenson, Rider Haggard and Jack London. Increasingly housebound, Hester recited poetry to her son and taught him the history, lore and legends of Mother Ireland, which gave him the idea that they themselves were descended from Irish royalty.

Most of Howard's heroes are of what he defined as the Gaelic type, and he could give them a certain depth of character because he identified with them; as Conan of Cimmeria is a distant descendant of King Kull of Valusia, Cormac of Connacht in turn is one of the Celts the Cimmerians evolved into. All of them are loners and fighters, all of them in exile of sorts. The outlaw Turlogh O'Brien, the pirate Cormac MacArt and the crusader Cormac Fitzgeoffrey, Brian Boru's warlord Red Cumal, Cormac of Connacht – these men come not to build or create, but rather destroy or, at best, maintain the status quo. Conan and Kull end up as kings, but sit uneasy on their stolen thrones. These are all men that Howard could identify with, and it can't be coincidence that most of them are tall and dark-haired. Some had grey eyes, some blue, but all of them, including Howard, could have been siblings.

Then there was Isaac's mother: "My grandmother was but one generation removed from south Ireland and she knew by heart all the tales and superstitions of the folks," remembered Robert in a letter to HP Lovecraft, "All the gloominess and dark mysticism of the Gaelic nature was hers, and

Block 38. Main Street, Cross Plains, Texas.

ABOVE: Robert E Howard and friend Tevis Clyde Smith indulge in some Conan-style combat. **BELOW:** Howard outside the family home with his dog Patches.

there was no light and mirth in her." She, and the stories she told, made young Robert's hair stand on end, and while he tried his hand at the cosmic horror of Lovecraft, it's in stories like "Pigeons from Hell" that he's at his best. Their horrors are on a more human scale, their air of authenticity cemented with off-hand details and bang-on characterisation. It's easy to imagine that he wrote them with his grandmother's voice in mind.

The legends of the Celts weren't the only ones he heard, though, and in the same letter to Lovecraft he recalled the stories told by the Howards' cook in his early childhood, an ex-slave he called Aunt Mary Bohannon. The returning dead of her tales may have been imaginary, but the cruel slave-master and his whippings certainly were not. These stories were the first that really moved him, and though the world he lived in was inherently racist, segregation was never clear-cut to him. Lovecraft may have been one of those middle class townies for whom it was easy to expound on the virtues of the white race, but the Howards dealt more closely with their black neighbours, and Hester especially knew how despised the Irish themselves had been. While she taught her son to be proud of his heritage, Robert usually wrote with sympathy about those given the short end of history's stick: the Native Americans, the black antagonists of his boxing stories and especially the wild, elusive Picts and their god-king Bran Mak Morn.

CONAN AND KULL WERE MEN HOWARD COULD IDENTIFY WITH

TALL TALES

That Howard's later stories are so eminently readable, and that each has its own strong narrative voice, can be traced to these stories he heard from his earliest days. From Aunt Mary, from his mother and his grandmother, he learned to tell a tale as if he himself believed it, no matter how tall or fanciful it was. "Poets are dangerous things," he reveals in one King Kull tale, "because they believe what they sing, at the time". But it wasn't just the stories he heard that formed him

and informed his writing: the violence we find in his tales was something with which he was all too familiar in real life.

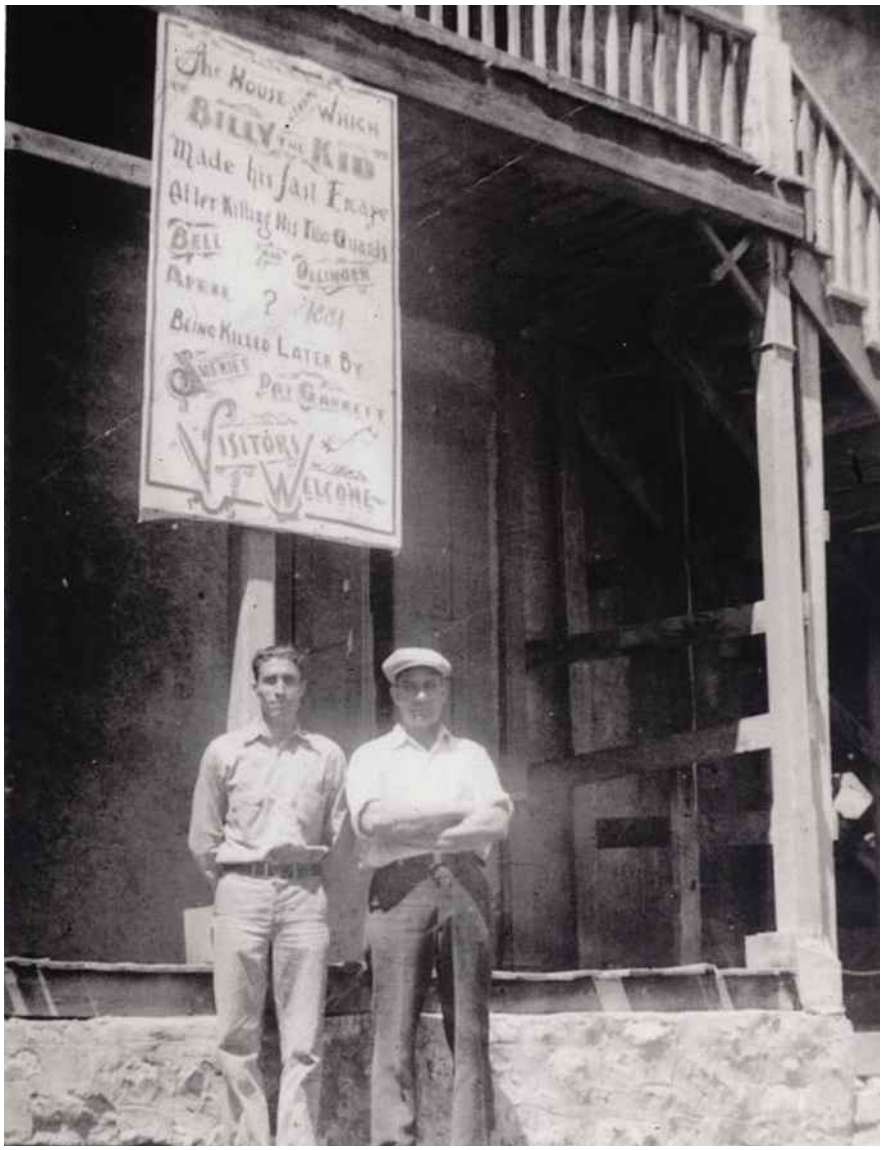
As the son of a country doctor, Robert saw not just the expected farming accidents, but also the results of the population explosion caused by the oil boom: knife and fist fights were common and victims of violence and industrial accidents were dropped on the Howards' porch to be patched up. As he later confided in a letter to HP Lovecraft: "The average child of 10 or 12 who's lived through a boom or so, knows more vileness and bestial sinfulness than a man of 30 should know." [2]

But Robert also learned other lessons on the rounds with Isaac. Often, he would wait on the porch and listen to the old-timers as they exchanged stories. Tall tales had been a vital and daily part of the frontier life of the old West, and had both a social and psychological function. They invariably dealt with the hardships the pioneers faced, but also celebrated their individualism, courage and resilience. In Robert's lifetime these tales reflected nostalgia for an era before 'progress' brought 'civilisation' with it and kept the frontier spirit alive.

Often, such tales would have a core of truth – a real character or historical event – but were told using humour or exaggeration. Bragging was a celebrated skill, with the audience complicit in the lie – as often as not, the narrator was also the butt of the joke. In earlier times these settlers, cowboys and roughnecks would have created a *Beowulf*; in this more prosaic age, the tales took a comic, parodic, or ironic turn. Humour makes a hard life softer.

As a teenager, Robert had gone out with his friends to gather tales from the old folks, not unlike what the Brothers Grimm had done a century earlier, and had become something of an expert, lecturing out-of-state correspondents on local history and lore. However, while he saw folklore and myth as the collective memory and identity of a people, he couldn't resist tweaking the stories to improve them, as he also 'improved' his own family's history. In his stories, too, he would rewrite history in the guise of fiction.

TALL TALES HAD BEEN A VITAL PART OF THE FRONTIER LIFE



ABOVE: REH on a trip exploring the old West, a vanishing world that inspired much of his writing.

The stories he wrote at the dawn of his career, for local newspapers and magazines, adhere closely to the form of the traditional tall tale, with colourful language, local settings and a nostalgia for the old ways of the West that were disappearing rapidly. This influence remained particularly strong in his boxing adventures and comedy Westerns, with protagonists like the oafish Breckenridge Elkins recognisable as parodies of Howard himself. To his later Westerns he brought realism: far less straightforward than the White Hat heroics of John Wayne, they foreshadow the violence and grit of Sergio Leone. At a time when the detectives of Hammett and Chandler exploded in the pulps, Howard wrote what could best be described as 'Desert Noir'.

CIVILISATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Though classified as a Fantasy tale, "Beyond the Black River" is as realistic as any of Howard's stories. It's one of the later Conan stories, and with his hero at the height of his popularity, Howard found the freedom to infuse it with the concerns that kept him awake at night, firmly grounding it in his own native soil. Sure, it contains some magic, but not much; what it's really about is life on the frontier. Written in 1935, it reaches back to the time he had first thought of Conan while visiting the town of Mission, near the border between Texas and Mexico, in 1932.

Mission lies a mere 15 miles (24km) from the Alamo, where James Bowie and the frontiersman-turned-congressman Davey Crocket fought a losing battle in 1836 against invading Mexican troops. The Alamo passed into legend, ultimately culminating in the image of John Wayne wearing a raccoon on his head. In Howard's story, the outpost is on the Pictish border. Here, Conan joins the young woodsman Baltus and tries to save the fort, abandoned by an uncaring government, from a Pictish uprising.

The typical hero of tall tales is larger than life, distinguished by an extraordinary birth or childhood, and usually associated with an animal. It took five storks to deliver Paul Bunyan, and he adventured through the whole of America with his blue ox Babe. Calamity Jane was on horseback before she could talk, Davey Crockett had "the ugliest dog in the district" and Pecos Bill was raised by coyotes. These animals are totems, like Odin's ravens and the dog that gave Cuchulainn his name. Battlefield-born Conan is known as Amra, the Lion, while Baltus teams up with a vengeful half-wild dog.

In this Hyborean Age Alamo, Conan and Baltus stand in for the larger than life folk heroes Bowie and Crockett, and the story is built from the stuff of which tall tales are made. Typically, the heroes of such tales often find themselves fighting against 'progress', trying to preserve their existing way of life. Conan's own 'barbarism' is an

attempt to maintain a threatened status quo; but as so often in these stories, the fight is ultimately futile. Baltus – as did Crockett – dies a heroic death. Conan survives by the skin of his teeth, and as the story concludes we find him in an inn, nursing his grudge against civilisation. The words spoken to him by a fellow survivor could have been those of Howard himself: "Barbarism is the natural state of mankind… Civilisation is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And barbarism must always ultimately triumph."

It was a belief that grew out of Howard's early experience of the world. The oil boom came to Cross Plains when he was a teenager, bringing with it a tide of speculators, roughnecks, criminality and disease. Robert grew up an impassioned critic of how such booms destroyed the social, economic and moral structures of previously stable communities. As he wrote in the *Argosy All-Story Weekly* in the spring of 1929: "I've seen towns leap into being overnight and become deserted almost as quick. I've seen old farmers, bent with toil, and ignorant of the feel of 10 dollars at a time, become millionaires in a week, by the way of oil gushers. And I've seen them blow every cent of it and die paupers. I've seen whole towns debauched by an oil boom and boys and girls go to the devil wholesale. I've seen promising youths turn from respectable citizens to dope-fiends, drunkards, gamblers and gangsters in a matter of months."

HITHER CAME CONAN

In the intensely practical culture of Cross Plains in the 1920s, few people would have regarded Howard's chosen career as a writer as legitimate work. He had tried to fit in and taken various manual jobs, but he hated being told what to do by people he considered his intellectual inferiors. He slogged off his frustration in boxing matches and ironically gained respect as regional champion amongst the roughnecks he otherwise despised. When his father allowed him to focus on his writing, Robert increasingly withdrew from the community, and soon he felt he was seen as "Doc Howard's crazy son Bob".

Howard would spend the rest of his life shuttling between brain and brawn, and Novalyne Price, the on/off girlfriend of his late twenties, didn't know which she'd be dating on any given day. The picture of him that is most often reproduced is also the least representative. "That damn fool hat bothers me," he complained to Novalyne when she made him wear it for the photograph. For him it represented the hated sweep of modernity through rural Texas; he wore the hat for her, but he could conform no further, and eventually they broke up. Half a century later, Price wrote about their time together in her book *One Who Walked Alone.* [3]

While ill at ease with the people of Cross Plains, Howard found an alternative family among the contributors to *Weird Tales*. This brotherhood of authors like HP Lovecraft, August Derleth, Clark Ashton Smith and E Hoffman Price passionately argued about their work and influences, and indulged in sneaking references to Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos into their stories. They had an enormous respect for each other, but also insurmountable differences. Lovecraft's racism irked Howard, and when Hoffman Price visited Cross Plains he raised an eyebrow over Robert's armed vigilance against highway robbers, not realising that he'd fallen victim to authentic, Texan showmanship; myth-making in progress.

ABOVE: 'Two-Gun Bob' knocks out his friend Truett Vinson. **LEFT:** Howard in the "damn fool hat" he wore for girlfriend Novalyne Price (below).

Weird Tales editor Farnsworth Wright was a capricious figure who approved or rejected stories according to his own instinct. He, as much as Howard, shaped what Conan would become. Left to himself, Howard would include little love interest and any women who did appear in his tales could easily take care of themselves. Under Wright's ægis, there was sex appeal and abundant floggings, with a chivalrous Conan rushing to the rescue.

Howard often described how Conan sprang up in his mind fully formed, a combination of "various prize-fighters gunmen, bootleggers, oilfield bullies, gamblers and honest workmen," but he confided to Novalyne Price that this was a stock answer and the character's origins were a mystery to him. And while he might have had the initial idea for Conan on holiday along the Rio Grande, it took him quite a while to get a handle on the character and his world.

To help him get started he based "The Phoenix on the Sword" on an unsold Kull story, with the romantic subplot removed and some magic inserted. Farnsworth Wright requested a rewrite, and Howard duly replaced a lengthy introduction with that now famous quote from the *Nemedian Chronicles*, beginning "Know, O Prince…" Hither came Conan, and Howard felt that he had a winner on his hands. The first published Conan story appeared in the December 1932 issue of *Weird Tales*.

Though he disparaged himself as a hack and told others that the stories wrote themselves, Howard actually worked hard at both the craft of writing and the marketing of his stories. He outlined them in detail, then wrote multiple drafts and made careful revisions. He was not the idiot savant that fantasy fandom myths sometimes make him out to be. He drew a map of Conan's world and gave it a pseudo-historical framework in his essay "The Hyborean Age".

A second batch of Conan yarns quickly followed. While not Howard's best, stories like "Iron Shadows in the Moon" and "Black Colossus", with their obligatory monsters and damsels in distress, were among his most imitated precisely *because* their formula was easy to follow.

Howard wrote these stories at a gallop: the Depression had killed off some of the magazines he sold to, and as his mother's health was spiralling downwards he needed

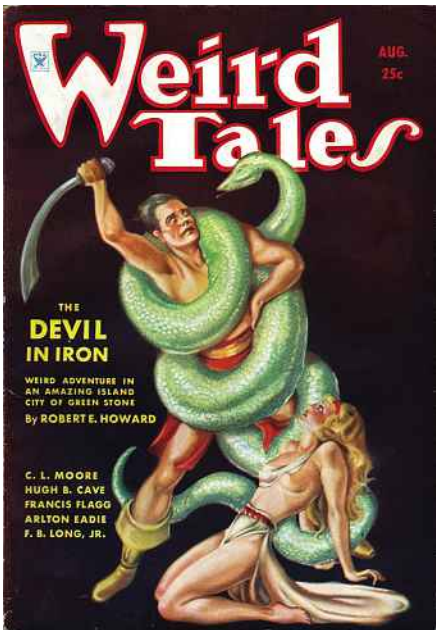
the money to cover her medical expenses. The Howards relied on the cheques that they received each month from *Weird Tales*, but then these cheques stopped coming, with the not inconsiderable sum of $800 owed. Farnsworth Wright's idiosyncratic approach to publishing also extended to the payroll administration.

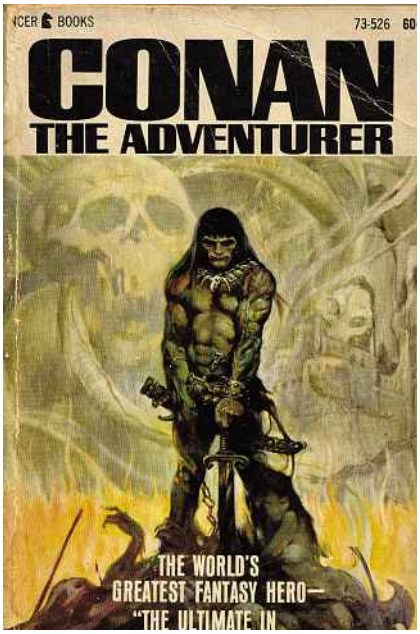
"I always hate to write a letter like this, but dire necessity forces me to. It is, in short, an urgent plea for money. It is nothing new for me to need money, but the present circumstances are different from those in which I generally found myself in the past," begins a letter Howard wrote to Wright in May 1935, followed by the eerily prophetic "If you cut off my monthly checks now, I don't know what in God's name we'll do."

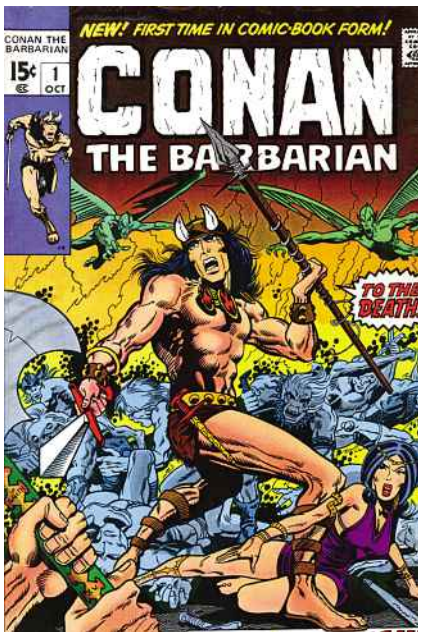
The whole letter is worth reading, [4] and would wring tears from a stone, but Robert received neither reply nor money from Wright. While he finished some more Conan stories, they were works in transition. Increasingly he realised that his heart lay in the old West, and "Black River" is already halfway there. The last was "Red Nails", its picture of a crumbling, decadent civilisation providing not merely the story's backdrop, but its meat and bones. With this, Howard was done with Conan and with *Weird Tales*.

TO THE CRISIS

As 1935 ended and 1936 began, a crisis seemed unavoidable. Isaac was seldom home, relentlessly doing the rounds amongst his poverty-stricken patients. Robert found some success selling his Westerns to magazines that *did* pay, but he missed the stability that *Weird Tales* had offered. Hester's health deteriorated further and as he was her sole carer, Robert hardly found time to work. "Woman after woman we hired, and they quit, either worn out by the work or unwilling to do it," he wrote in his last letter to Lovecraft, in May 1936. "I've gone for nearly a week at a time without even taking off my shoes, just snatching a nap as I could between times."







ABOVE: Conan has proved Howard's most popular and enduring creation, evolving from his appearances in *Weird Tales* through paperback books, comics and movies.

BOTH PICS: OCCAM / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

BELOW: The funeral notice for Robert E Howard and his mother. **ABOVE LEFT:** The Howard family grave. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Howard home, now a museum, in Cross Plains.

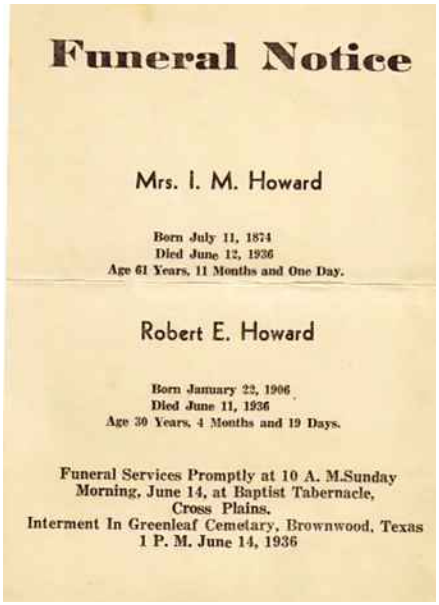
Emotionally drained, he saw no prospect of earning a steady living from his writing, had no one to love and feared growing old or ill himself. For Robert, "the game was not worth the candle? Isaac saw it coming, and hid the household firearms, but hadn't reckoned with the borrowed pistol Robert kept in the glove compartment of his car. On 11 June 1936 Hester sank into a coma from which Robert was assured she would not awake. He walked out of the door, got into the car, and shot himself.

"Can you authenticate the story?" asked Hoffman Price. "It seems so damn outrageous I can't believe it." Lovecraft had written him the bad news, taking it upon himself to compose an obituary for *Weird Tales* in memory of Howard's work. "To hell with the blow to literature," bristled Hoffman Price, "the loss of the man is so damned incomparably greater than the loss of anything as stupid as literature." He himself tried to sum up his friend, but found it impossible. "An overgrown boy – a brooding anachronism," he tried. "A man of strange, whimsical, bitter and utterly illogical resentments and hatreds and enmities and grudges." Eventually he gave up, concluding only that, "If you met Howard, I can not add; if you did not, I can not start." It's an undoubted truth that has tripped up Howard scholars and biographers ever since.

A heartbroken Isaac Howard buried his wife and son and began the consuming work of putting Robert's affairs in order, amongst them the now legendary 'trunk' containing thousands of pages of unsorted typescripts, notes, drafts and letters. He tried to get the *Weird Tales* payments, by then over $1,500, out of Farnsworth Wright, but only received letters about the editor's own ill health. Aged by both time and his circumstances, Isaac died in 1944. Lovecraft had already passed on in 1937 and *Weird Tales* went under in 1954 in the general collapse of the pulps.

THE RETURN OF CONAN

In the 1950s, the Conan stories resurfaced in hardbacks. Where HP Lovecraft had a posthumous torchbearer in August Derleth, Howard got science fiction writer L Sprague de Camp who seized with both hands the opportunity to edit Howard's work. He dipped into 'the trunk', completing



Funeral Notice

Mrs. I. M. Howard

Born July 11, 1874
Died June 12, 1936
Age 61 Years, 11 Months and One Day.

Robert E. Howard

Born January 22, 1906
Died June 11, 1936
Age 30 Years, 4 Months and 19 Days.

Funeral Services Promptly at 10 A. M.Sunday Morning, June 14, at Baptist Tabernacle, Cross Plains.
Interment In Greenleaf Cemetary, Brownwood, Texas
1 P. M. June 14, 1936

unfinished drafts and converting Howard's other work into tales of Conan. "This did not prove difficult," he wrote proudly. "I had merely to delete anachronisms and introduce a supernatural element."

In the mid-1960s Frank Frazetta fixed the definitive look of Conan with his cover paintings for mass-market Lancer paperbacks, while de Camp as self-appointed biographer sketched the popular image of Robert E Howard as "maladjusted to the point of psychosis". Many rewrites and 'posthumous collaborations' and pastiches by de Camp, Lin Carter and others followed; then came the long-running Marvel Comics series and finally John Milius's 1982 film *Conan the Barbarian*. By now, Conan had become an oiled-up Muscle Beach hero, and Howard himself the subject of wild speculation. "He was convinced that the town wanted to exterminate him... and he would go home and board up his windows, load rifles... A complete nut!" director John Milius says in a documentary accompanying his film. He continues: "He's alone one night, and he feels a shadow overtake him from behind, and he knows that Conan stands behind him with a large axe! And Conan tells him: 'Stay there and write!'"

Howard himself had now become a tall tale, a myth.

Things have slowly improved. The growth of Howard scholarship has given rise to gorgeously illustrated reprints of pure, unedited Howard and several well-researched biographies, although the urge to mythologise is difficult to overcome and Howard's tragic death still elicits finger pointing and speculation. There is still a lot we don't know: Howard was a complex man whose life did not obey the rules of drama.

Besides, perhaps it's the writing, not the death, we should focus on. Underneath all the fantastic trappings, Robert E Howard wrote about a world he knew. The bulk of his work is written with skill and honesty, and is as fresh as when it first appeared a lifetime ago. "But the real secret," wrote HP Lovecraft of Howard's stories, "is that he himself is in each and every one of them". FT

NOTES

1 *FT* readers will be happy to know that Robert himself had a copy of Fort's *Lo!* in his own collection.

2 Letter to HP Lovecraft, December 1930.

3 The book is required reading for any Howard scholar, and the film based on it, *The Whole Wide World*, should appeal to fan and layman alike.

4 http://users.rcn.com/shogan/howard/letters/rehlet7.htm

RECOMMENDED BROWSING

The Official Robert E Howard Forum
www.conan.com

The Robert E Howard Foundation
www.rehfoundation.com

REH Two-Gun Raconteur: The Definitive REH Journal
http://rehtwogunraconteur.com

The Dark Man: The Journal of REH Studies
www.robert-e-howard.org/TDM/index.html

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Remco van Straten and **Angeline B Adams** live and work in Belfast, where their lives are ruled by an Alien Burmese Cat. This is their first article for *Fortean Times*.

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Pigging out at Christmas

KARL SHUKER is on the track of the terrifying Swedish gloso – a flesh-eating pig-monster that can grant psychic powers but is particularly to be feared at Christmas time...

KARL SHUKER is a zoologist, cryptozoologist and author living in the West Midlands. He works as a full-time freelance zoological consultant, media consultant, and noted author specialising in cryptozoology.

In Britain, the animals most closely linked to Christmas-time via folklore and other traditions include such familiar and generally friendly species as the robin, the reindeer, and the turkey. Conversely, in Skåne and Blekinge, the two southernmost provinces of Sweden, a very different and far more daunting creature pervades the Season of Goodwill, and its presence is anything but good. Scarcely known outside Scandinavia, outwardly it resembles a pig, but no ordinary one, for this preternatural entity is in many ways the porcine equivalent of Britain's phantasmal Black Dogs, and is just as dangerous.

Most commonly referred to as the gloso (other names for it include the galoppso and the gluppso, all translating as 'galloping sow'), this dire beast is grim in every sense of the word. This is because the gloso is a church grim (or kyrkogrim in Sweden), i.e. a supernatural creature derived from the spirit of an animal or person supposedly sacrificed when a church was founded, and which now protects the church and its grounds for eternity, unable to be killed by any normal weapon. Generally, the gloso lives either within the cemetery of the church to which it is bound, or within a mound in a field directly adjacent to that church.

Those unfortunate enough to have encountered this terrifying entity liken it to an enormous female domestic pig, usually jet-black in colour (though sometimes ghostly white), but with a ridge of razor-sharp spines or bristles running down the centre of its back, a pair of huge tusks curving out from its jaws, eyes that glow a fiery red, and the fearful yet very real ability to breathe fire. Other tangible, physical abilities attributed to the gloso, and which thereby distinguish it from insubstantial ghosts or spectres, include its predilection for devouring fresh corpses in the churchyard and for sharpening its tusks upon gravestones. It also leaves visible tracks in its wake.

The gloso has a predilection for devouring fresh corpses

ABOVE: The Norse god Frey pictured with the great boar Gullinburste – a mythological precursor of the gloso?

The gloso can be encountered at any time during the year, but it is said to be at its most malign during the week linking Christmas and the New Year. And yet it is during this same week that it can also be its most beneficial – provided a certain magical rite associated with it is performed correctly. If it is not, the person performing it will not live to see in the New Year.

According to Swedish legend, on the evening of Christmas Day (and also on New Year's Eve) anyone can discover everything that will happen to them during the year to come if they are brave enough to withstand an assault by the gloso. The ritual stipulates that after the Sun has set, you must visit four different churches in four different parishes, walk around each church in an anti-clockwise direction, and then blow through the keyhole of each church's door. After blowing through the keyhole of the fourth church's door, if you then peer through it you will witness all of the most notable events that await you in the New Year, rushing before your eyes in a rapid stream of images like a speeded-up movie film.

However, you must pay a steep price for such precious insights – the wrath of the gloso. For it will abruptly appear and chase after you, spurting hot blasts of fire at your rear end and striving to run between your legs so that its ridge of razor-sharp bristles can rip you apart. Happily, however, if you are brave enough to attempt the feat, there is one way in which this dread beast can be pacified – by turning around and facing it, with an arm outstretched, offering it a loaf of bread. If the gloso allows you to feed it the bread, you are safe. If not...

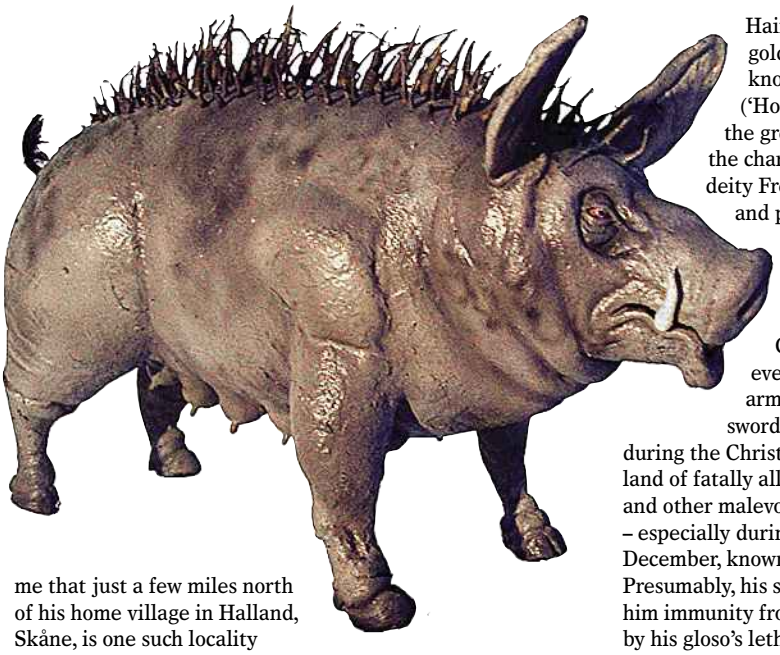
In some variations of this legend, the same gift of New Year foresight can be obtained by confronting the gloso at a crossroads. As a teenager, the maternal grandmother of Swedish artist and cryptozoologist Richard Svensson once visited a crossroads in Blekinge on New Year's Eve for the express purpose of conjuring up the gloso – though merely to see it rather than to witness what the New Year held in store for her. (Un) fortunately, however, the gloso failed to materialise.

The gloso is also part of a much lengthier, more complex magical ritual in which the person taking part is hoping to gain psychic talents, and this multi-stage ritual has to be performed on several different magically potent dates, including Christmas night once again. Here is how Swedish folklorist

Håkan Lindh described it to me:

"The ritual was a kind of vision-quest that a person who wanted to gain psychic gifts undertook several years in a row. After a bit of fasting he went out, under absolute silence, on a night-time walk to powerful places, a graveyard, a stream running towards north, a holy well, etc, and during these walks he was given trials. One of these was Gloso, and he avoided danger by just keeping his legs together and refusing to show fear. If he did, he came to no harm and gained a bit of magic power. Next year he met something else, a dragon turned into a chicken, for example, Odin on a horse, a band of aggressive Vättar [Norse nature spirits], and so on and on. While the ceremony went on, he got visions about who would die in the different homes he passed by, who would get ill, and what he could do to cure those illnesses. He also gained material magic tools during these walks, like bones from dead people etc. This ritual continued to be performed until about 150 years ago, and I personally know a few who have tried it recently."

In some Swedish traditions, moreover, the gloso haunts lonely roads where murders have occurred. Håkan has told me that just a few miles north of his home village in Halland, Skåne, is one such locality (where a murder took place during a botched robbery), and that alleged sightings of the gloso have been reported there and in the woods nearby.

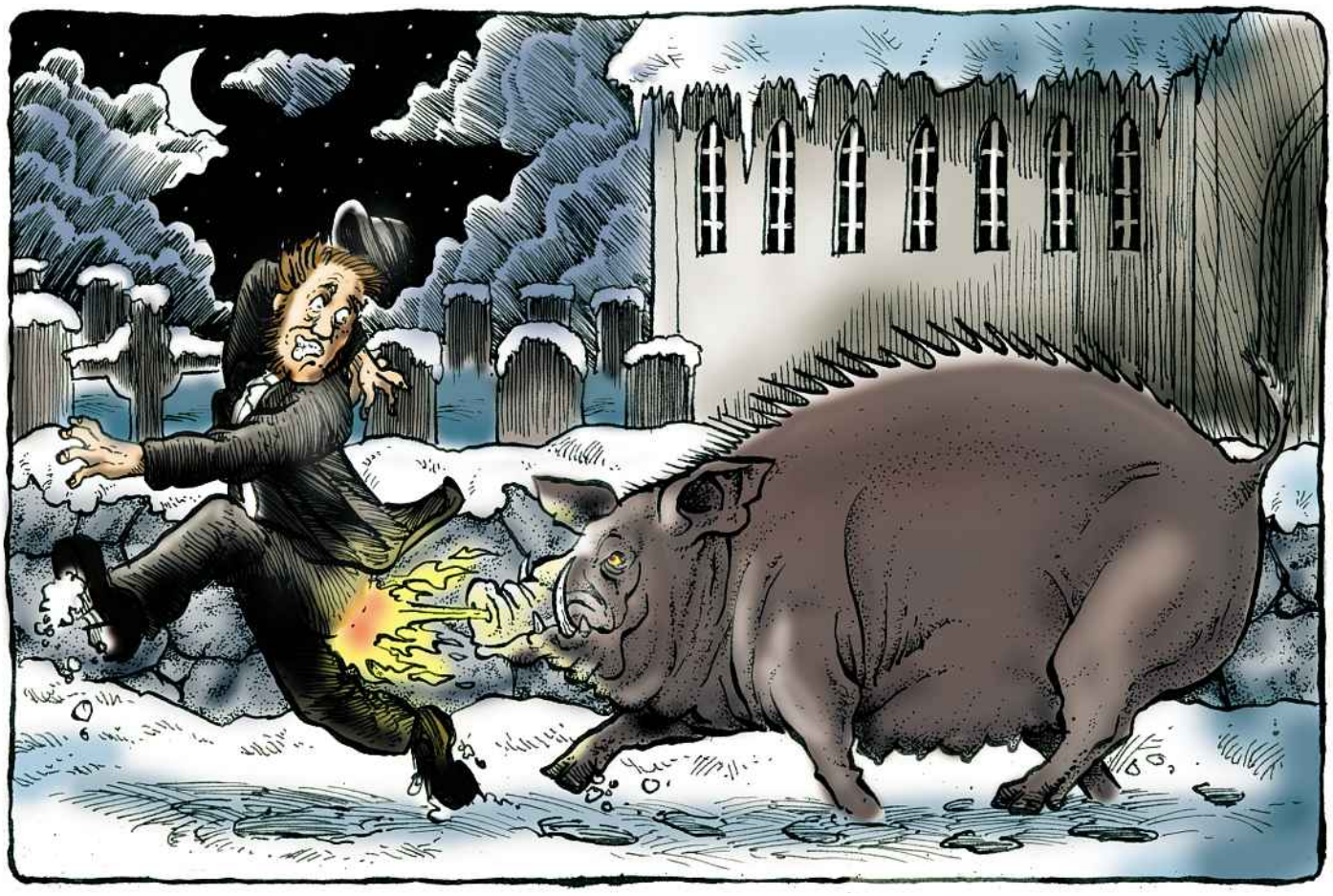


ABOVE: A model of the gloso made by Richard Svennson.

BELOW: The gloso gives chase.

It is possible that the gloso is a remnant of earlier Nordic legends appertaining to Gullinburste ('Golden Hair'). Named after its golden bristles, and also known as Slidrugtanne ('Horrible Tusks'), this was the great boar that pulled the chariot of the Norse deity Frey, god of fertility and pleasure. Moreover, in Blekinge there is even a local myth neatly combining Norse tradition with Christianity, in which every year St Thomas, armed with a mighty sword, rides a tamed gloso during the Christmas week to rid the land of fatally alluring troll-maidens and other malevolent pagan beings – especially during the evening of 21 December, known as Thomas's Eve. Presumably, his saintly status affords him immunity from being torn in two by his gloso's lethal back-bristles while riding it!

As if the gloso were not terrifying enough, Skåne and Blekinge also lay claim to a second grim that is just as frightening and ferocious – the nattravnen ('night raven') or leharven. According to Richard once again, this



BOTH IMAGES: RICHARD SVENSSON

RICHARD SVENSSON

monstrous entity resembles a huge bird-like winged beast, dark in colour but lacking feathers, and sometimes portrayed as quite pterodactyl-like in overall appearance.

At night, the nattravnen flies over the territory to which, as a grim, it is bound, and if anyone should wander into its domain the nattravnen will not hesitate to devour them. But this is not the only way in which someone seeing this entity could suffer. Should he happen to see it in flight as it passes in front of the Moon, illuminating and revealing its skeleton through its remarkably thin skin, the observer will be stricken with agonising pains, falling seriously ill and vomiting blood, and sometimes even passing blood in his urine for at least a week. So merely the briefest sight of a nattravnen should be avoided at all cost.

In addition, Håkan has informed me that in olden days if a person were murdered and buried secretly in a hidden grave afterwards, a stake would be forced through his corpse to prevent his vengeful spirit from materialising as a supernatural entity. Once the stake's wood had rotted, however, his spirit would then be freed, becoming a nattravnen, which would swiftly take wing in search of the murderer.

This monster resembles a huge bird-like winged beast

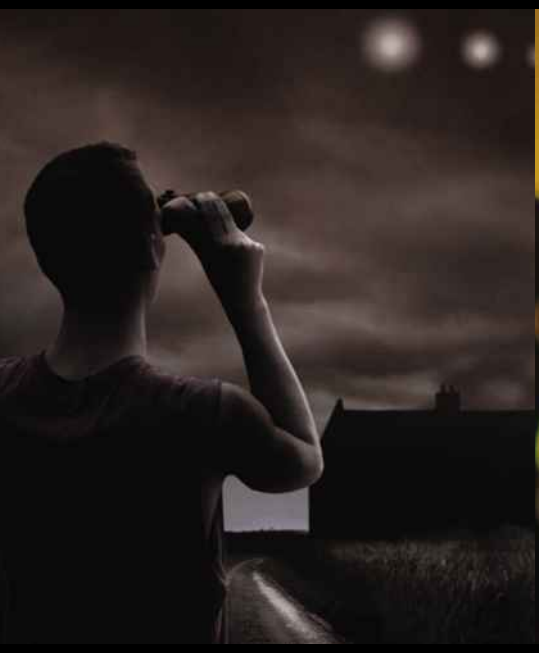
In such cases as these, the nattravnen didn't always assume the form of a bird (or pterodactyl). Instead, it sometimes became a skeleton wrapped in a black cape, or even a human skeleton sporting a large pair of wings, which made a loud noise as it flew through the air (even though the nattravnen itself was generally invisible). If a person heard one approaching, his only recourse was to lie flat face-down upon the ground (where traditionally the nattravnen cannot land) and hope that this foul entity would pass by, because if it came too close it would inflict sickness and even death.

ABOVE: The terrible nattravnen pursues an unlucky villager.

Compared to such horrors as the gloso and nattravnen, even our own Black Dogs, Owlmen, and other British zooform entities seem positively tame, so I hope that every *FT* reader's Yuletide celebrations this year will be blessed by a notable absence of fire-breathing pigs and peckish pterodactyls! Happy Christmas everyone, and a very fortean New Year to you all! FT

My grateful thanks to Richard Svensson and Håkan Lindh for providing me with information concerning the gloso and nattravnen, and also to Richard for permitting me to include his superb illustrations.

YOU'LL BE DREAMING OF A DARK CHRISTMAS...



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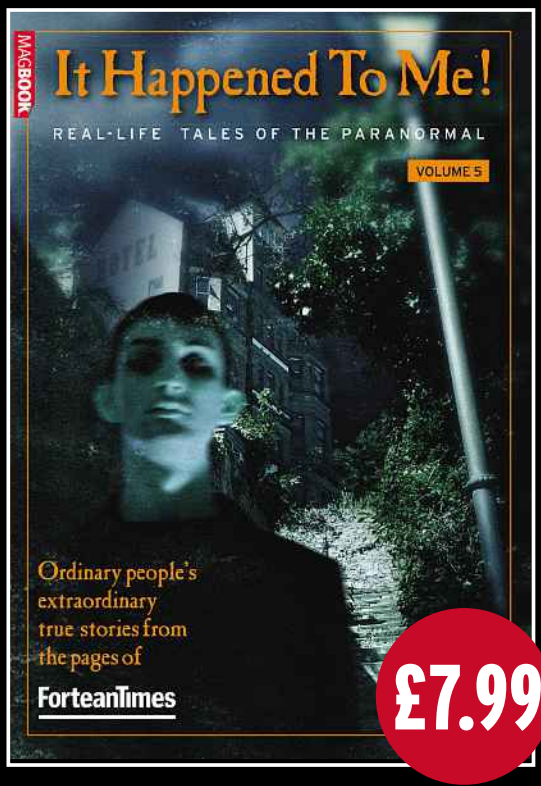
The dog-headed men terrorising the North of England...

The weird old lady who haunted a staircase...



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This month's books, films and games

reviews

Mediæval gazeteer revisited

A fascinating compendium of unreliable information about the Middle East, Africa and Asia – and some sound advice on growing diamonds and avoiding cannibals

The Book of Marvels and Travels

Sir John Mandeville; Trans: Anthony Bale

Oxford University Press 2012

Pb, 220pp, maps, notes, bib, inds, £8.99, ISBN 9780199600601

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.99

Imagine a mediæval amalgam of *Rough Guide*, Ripley's Believe-it-or-not, Baron Munchausen, *Morning of the Magicians, Chariot of the Gods*, Sunday tabloid, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* – and you have Mandeville's *Book*, a phenomenal 'bestseller' in the 14th century onwards, long before printed editions. Ostensibly the narrative of an English knight's voyage to Constantinople, Jerusalem and beyond into Africa and Asia, it is more accurately described as a playfully unreliable annotated anthology of wonders from earlier natural histories, romances, myths, travelogues, bestiaries, Bible stories, hagiographies, and moral tales, from such authors as Isidore of Seville, Odoric of Pordenone and William of Boldensele – not forgetting our old pals Herodotus, Pliny the Elder, Virgil, and St Augustine. There are stories of the Great Khan of Cathay; Prester John, the mythical Christian prince in the Far East; Catolonabes (Hassan i Sabbah) and his Ismaili assassins; dog-headed men on the island of Natumeran; and people in Ethiopia with a single foot so huge it could be used as a parasol.

Anthony Bale puts it well in his introduction: "Part travelogue, part fantasy, part scholarly treatise, part pilgrimage of both body and soul, part record of ethnographic desire, wit, and whimsy… [It] articulates a kind of relativism (or 'proto-multiculturalism') about the world, its religions, and its various peoples, a world uniquely open to dozens of seductive, if morally ambiguous, versions of 'good' and 'true' faith."

Mandeville's guide to the Holy Land points out many sites where major biblical events unfolded. Near Hebron, for instance, is the cave where Adam and Eve lived after being thrown out of the Garden of Eden, and where Cain and Abel were born. (Their son Seth, ancestor of Jesus, was born nearby.) In Jerusalem be sure to visit the rock where a sleeping Jacob saw "the angel go up and down by a ladder". Near Mount Calvary are four stone columns always dripping with water; "Some say that these stones weep for Our Lord's death". Nearby, St Helena, the Emperor Constantine's mother, unearthed the True Cross, "under a rock where the Jews had hidden it". Helena was the daughter of Old King Cole (the merry old soul).

The further out (east or south) our author goes, the more 'far out' his stories become. In the river Indus "one finds eels thirty feet long". The Fountain of Youth rises near Kollam (Quilon) on the Malabar coast, and "they say" that this flows from the Earthly Paradise. The best diamonds in the world are found in India. They "grow together, male and female. They are fed by heavenly dew, and they conceive and engender little children that multiply and grow through the years. I've put it to the test many times: if one looks after them, together with a little bit of rock, and waters them often with May dew, they'll grow each year and the small ones will grow large."

> **"It's so hot that men's bollocks hang down to their shins due to their physical degeneracy"**

On the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, "it's so hot… that men's bollocks hang down to their shins due to their considerable physical degeneracy. Local people know how to bind them up tightly and smear them with a special ointment to hold them up, or else these men could not survive. In this country and in many others besides, men and women together lie stark naked in rivers and pools from mid-morning until gone noon. They immerse themselves in the water except for their faces because of the intense heat there. On this island there are ships without nails or other ironware, because the adamantine rocks in the sea would pull the ships towards them."

The inhabitants of Lamuri (Sumatra) don't wear clothes; "they say that God created Adam and Eve naked and that people shouldn't be ashamed of that which God made, because nothing God made is repulsive." There is free love, women give their children to "whosoever they like", land and crops are held in common; there is one blemish on this communist utopia: "They eat human flesh more enthusiastically than anything else."

Such whimsy is interspersed with more accurate descriptions of suttee, foot-binding, and other strange customs. And there's no Flat Earth nonsense: "Just as one climbs out of our countries towards Jerusalem, one goes down towards the region of Prester John, from Jerusalem, and that's because the entire Earth is round."

The identity of the author, said to be a knight from St Albans, is uncertain, but he might well have visited the Holy Land. The *Book* was probably written in the 1350s, though the earliest dated extant manuscript was made in Paris in 1371. There are differing versions in English, French, Anglo-Norman, and Franco-Flemish as various scribes added or subtracted passsages. Soon it was translated into many languages – and of course printing spread it much further. Columbus, Ralegh and Frobisher read the *Book* in preparation for their travels to the New World; discoveries there didn't immediately disprove mediæval fantasies, but were seen as providing supportive evidence, although even in the 16th century there were sceptics like Richard Hakluyt and Ben Johnson.

Anthony Bale's translation is lucid and terse and his roughly 500 explanatory notes fascinating. However, I found myself flipping back and forth, and in this particular work I would have preferred the old-fashioned convention of placing footnotes (as the word implies) at the foot of the page to which they refer.

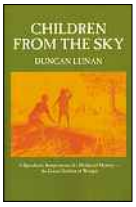
Paul Sieveking

Fortean Times Verdict

INFORMATIVE EDITION OF A PIVOTAL MEDIÆVAL CLASSIC **9**

Space kiddies

An enthusiastic study of the Green Children with some regrettable lapses



Children from the Sky

A Speculative Interpretation of a Mediæval Mystery – the Green Children of Woolpit

Duncan Lunan

Mutus Liber 2012

Pb, 534pp, illus, ind, bib, £16.99, ISBN 9781908097057

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.99

Two late 12th-century English chroniclers, William of Newburgh and Ralph of Coggeshall, tell similar stories relating to Woolpit, a village near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. According to these accounts, one day in the 1150s, two young children appeared out of a ditch and wandered "thunderstruck" through the fields until they were captured by the locals. The children seemed to know nothing about the local customs and didn't even know what was edible. To cap it all, their skin was leek-green. They described the strange and wonderful country they came from, where all people and edible things were green and where there was no day, but a perpetual twilight. The story of the Green Children is a popular one today; the sign that identifies the village carries an image of the children, and a number of theories exist about the origin of the tale.

Children from the Sky is Duncan Lunan's attempt to create a 'speculative interpretation' of this story. Lunan draws on the details of the children's homeland to reconstruct an extraterrestrial environment; his theory is that the green children were genetically-engineered human colonists from another planet, accidentally delivered to Suffolk during a matter-transmitter accident. In addition, Lunan ties this story into a whole speculative history of past extraterrestrial contact, involving – who else? – the Knights Templar.

Lunan's speculative journey is entertainingly vivid and packed with fun ideas, drawing heavily on the mediæval fascination with celestial phenomena. There are some worrying gaps, though, from a mediævalist's perspective. For instance, early in the text Lunan portrays William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum* as a sober, well-researched narrative, without mentioning that the story of the green children appears just before stories about a dog found inside the rock in a quarry and similar marvels. Similarly, Lunan embraces any element of the account that could be interpreted to mean an extraterrestrial origin while explaining away evidence that tends to argue against it. And when he repeats the old canard that mediæval 'Green Man' carvings are somehow linked to pre-Christian religion – even in passing – it's hard not to feel that the author's enthusiasm has got the better of him again. This attitude to scholarship persists throughout the book. Where a fact might help Lunan's theory, it is dragooned into service; where the sources say something different, Lunan has a notion about what they really meant.

That said, *Children from the Sky* is an enjoyable read. Lunan's speculations are engagingly bold, and he draws dozens of seemingly unrelated strands into a story that, however tenuous its foundations, makes you wish you could believe in it. The sheer bravura force of Lunan's enthusiasm and imagination makes *Children from the Sky* worth reading.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

SOME WELL RESEARCH WITNESS ACCOUNTS (AND A FEW LACUNÆ) **7**

The Lancashire Witches

Philip C Almond

I B Taurus 2012

Hb, 209pp, illus, ind, notes, bib £19.99, ISBN 9781780760629

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.99

The 400th anniversary of the execution of members of two rival 'witch clans' of Pendle Hill, in Lancashire, has seen two excellent studies of "England's Salem".

In the early 17th century, the Forest of Pendle was a backwater, where superstition was stronger than the rule of law. This story mainly concerns two extended and lawless families, both ruled by old, blind matriarchs, commonly regarded as "notorious witches": one, Elizabeth Southerns, known as Old Demdike, and the other Anne Whittle, known as Chattox.

By all accounts the flame was put to this social powder-keg when Demdike's teenaged granddaughter, Alizon Device, had an argument with a travelling pedlar who promptly fell lame. His family took the matter to the magistrate, accusing Alizon of witchcraft.

The local magistrate, Roger Nowell, had been waiting for the right moment to suppress both clans. He arrested 16 women and four men from the 'rival covens'. They were detained for trial at the Lancaster assizes where, in fear of their lives, they accused each other of complicity in grave-robbing and many murders by witchcraft. Old Mother Demdike died awaiting trial but, on 20 August 1612, 10 of the accused were hanged – including Alizon Device and her brother James, their mother (Demdike's daughter), and Chattox and her daughter.

We know most of this in some detail due to the official account of the proceedings – *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the County of Lancaster* – completed by the assiduous court clerk Thomas Potts in 1613. What is less well known is that in 1849, William Harrison Ainsworth (a rival to Dickens and Thackeray) wrote a novel, *The Lancashire Witches*, based upon the trials, which has fixed most of the classic depiction of witches – as pointy-hatted, toothless old crones astride broomsticks – ever since.

Professor Almond has a number of solid academic works on historical witchcraft and religious beliefs behind him. He points out that the beliefs and motivations of Nowell, Potts and their ilk did not spring into being fully formed.

Within the recent memory of both men occurred the notorious cases of witches tried and executed at Warboys in East Anglia in the 1590s; and at St Osyth in Essex in 1582, an old midwife, Ursula Kempe, was tried and hanged for selling cures and charms against bewitchment. They also knew (and praised) King James's *Dæmonologie* (1597) – itself influenced by Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) – both of which introduced to English jurisprudence many Continental ideas about witches and their menace. Potts also had to hand details of the trial of Jennet Preston of Gisburn (not far north of Pendle) who was hanged at York a few weeks earlier.

A prime example of this received influence concerns the infamous 'sabbat of witches' at the evocatively named Malkin Tower, the family home of Demdike's brood. It was, most likely, an old cottage but called a 'tower' sarcastically, even by the family. When Nowell arrested her mother and her daughter, Elisabeth Device panicked. She called family, friends, associates and even rivals, to meet over a meal at Malkin Tower to discuss rescues and strategies. The fact that it was to be on Good Friday could have been chance, but was later counted against her. Some stayed away or fled what was coming, but those that came included the aforementioned Jennet Preston.

To Potts it was clearly a Satanic sabbat – "a great Assemblie of the Graund Witches, the like whereof hath not been heard of" – and many of the 18 attendees later paid a price for it. Although their confessions gave Nowell little to go on, it was prosecuted as a convocation for the satanic baptism of new witches, including Alizon. His prize witness was Alizon's nine-year-old sister Jennet, who was undoubtedly schooled to provide suitable

details.

Almond follows each of the Pendle protagonists with exemplary clarity and an impressive array of historical and critical sources. Of the many books on the storm over Pendle, this must rank as one of the best.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

IMPRESSIVELY CLEAR STUDY OF AN UNPLEASANT EPISODE **9**

The *Classic of Changes* in Cultural Context

A Textual Archæology of the *Yijing*

Scott Davis

Cambria Press 2012

Hb, 305pp, illus, notes, bib, inds, $114.99/£71.99, ISBN 9781604978087

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £71.99

Outside traditional exegesis, scholarly approaches to the *Yijing*, the Chinese *Book of Changes*, are usually purely sinological or philological, which may explain why Scott Davis has been struggling to bring his ideas before the public for at least 15 years. Davis has a structural/anthropological approach, which doesn't really 'fit' with standard ideas about the classic, so it's a real pleasure to see his book in print at last.

Whether treated as a divination manual or a classic of philosophy and cosmology, the basic text of the *Yijing* has been surrounded, over the centuries, by commentaries and explication that have kept it 'live' for its contemporary users and their current concerns, so modern Western readers rarely realise how different archaic Chinese culture was to our own. It's the anthropological approach to that culture, based on an array of sources, Western, Chinese and Japanese, that provides the basis of Davis's hypothesis.

The main concern here is the composition of the book, which Davis argues must be treated as a whole, uniting both the structure and ordering of the linear figures, the hexagrams, with their accompanying text. Rather than being a random collection of oracles, according to this notion everything, from the placing of the hexagrams and their associated texts in a precise order to the reason that particular textual symbols appear where they do, is the result of conscious composition on a staggeringly complex scale. Perhaps the implied sophistication of its archaic authors is one of the reasons why Davis's ideas have hitherto been resisted.

Less a sustained exposition of his thesis than a collection of essays providing variations on its theme, the book explores such topics as 'age sets' (significant decades in a man's life, accompanied by rituals, such as reaching manhood at 20, marriage at 30, and so on) and their reflection in the ordering of the book's 64 hexagrams and their texts; startling structural symmetries in the arrangement of the hexagram figures that certainly imply conscious design; the way the *Yijing* models the four seasons; the importance of mountains in it symbolism, and so on. All this is backed up by fascinating anthropological material on ancient ritual and the organisation of ancient society, which provide new vistas in Changes research.

This is, uncompromisingly, a scholarly work for specialists, requiring a good grounding in *Yijing* studies, and there are occasions, particularly in the more structuralist discussions, where Davis's use of academic jargon doesn't make for easy reading. Its scholarship, however, is thorough and wide-ranging, its ideas deeply thought-provoking. Whether one believes that Davis has 'the answer' or simply 'another interpretation', his work opens up extensive new fields for study and contemplation that one hopes he and others will continue to explore. It's regrettable that the book is priced so highly that its fascinating content will be beyond the reach of most people outside the university library system, and I can only urge the publisher to make it available in paperback at the earliest opportunity.

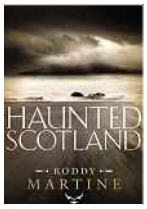
Steve Moore

Fortean Times Verdict

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH SHOWS YIJING'S SOPHISTICATION **10**

Ghostly Scots

Interesting guide to Scotland's ghosties and ghoulies and lang-legged beasties



Haunted Scotland

Roddy Martine

Birlinn Limited 2010

Pb, 195pp, index £7.99, ISBN 978 1 841587400

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £7.59

Haunted Scotland in 195 pages is a tall order, but the book does not attempt completeness. It is based partly on the author's experiences and partly on interviews. Its strange collection of stories will probably be unfamiliar to the reader; Roddy Martine encountered most of them during his tours of Scotland as a writer on all things Scottish. He wrote *The Secrets of Rosslyn,* which I enjoyed reading, so I was looking forward to this work. As it is a personal journey, the 24 chapters don't flow together, and it reads almost as a collection of essays, with each chapter being a standalone work.

The book has faults. One incorrect story repeated is that Edinburgh's Mary King's Close, an underground street, was bricked up during the plague, with its still living victims inside. It didn't happen: the story was put about by the first tour company to manage the site but has since been corrected.

There are also a couple of moments where I wonder why Martine is investigating the paranormal. He is invited to take part in a ghost hunt at the Camera Obscura on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, a tourist attraction since the 19th century. In the 1960s, the owners took over the adjacent building, a former 'ragged school' which is now an extension to the Camera Obscura. For a couple of years before the redevelopment, a number of ghost hunts took place there. Martine attended one of these vigils, but left part-way through as it looked as if was going to be a long night. On another occasion he had the opportunity to have the powers of a medium temporarily transferred to him so he could see a spirit. He declined, because he did not know the person he would be seeing when she was alive, so did not wish to see her now. Neither of these represent the greatest commitment to exploring the paranormal.

These niggles aside, we have an interesting book with hauntings and psychic experiences that, as far as I am aware, other people have not investigated. The characters Martine met while writing this book include a seer and James IV, who died in 1513 (and is now reincarnated as a woman called A J Stewart). There are tales of witchcraft used to extract revenge, ghosts scaring people away from council houses and timeslips. Enough new fortean fare to keep anyone occupied for a night or two…

Gordon Rutter

Fortean Times Verdict

ONE FOR SCOTTISH FORTEANS AND GHOST ENTHUSIASTS **8**

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All shook up

A catastrophic quake is increasingly likely as humanity embraces urban life

The Million Death Quake

The Science of Predicting Earth's Deadliest Natural Disaster

Roger Musson

Palgrave Macmillan 2012

Hb, 250pp, notes, £16.99, ISBN 9780230119413

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £15.29

Roger Musson will be familiar from his many contributions to FT, but he is also Head of Seismic Hazard and Archives at the British Geological Survey and their chief media spokesperson, and it is in this context that he has written *The Million Death Quake*. It seems increasingly likely that an earthquake will kill a million people (the record holder is the 1556 Shaanxi quake that killed an estimated 830,000 people), simply because more of us are living in cities, and, as the title of one chapter says, 'Earthquakes don't kill people, buildings do'.

As one of the world's leading seismologists, he is the perfect guide to the science behind the study of earthquakes and quakes' increasing threat, as well as the unenviable task that he and his colleagues have of trying to predict quakes far enough in advance so that a million-death quake never occurs. The recent manslaughter conviction of six Italian seismologists for failing to communicate the risk of the 2009 L'Aquila quake underlines the complexities and risks of trying to do this. *The Million Death Quake* is very timely, as it covers the circumstances leading up to this conviction and also explores the wider historic and scientific context of earthquake detection and prediction.

While Musson is upbeat about the science of earthquake prediction, he is also clear how far we remain from being able to do this reliably. He is particularly good on personal anecdotes that illustrate this, recounting his experiences of being involved with the aftermath of quakes in Haiti, Chile and Indonesia, among others. This enables him to point out that these days, bizarrely, seismologists often hear about quakes from journalists – electromagnetic waves carry phone and Internet signals much faster than the Earth carries seismic waves. In this, and in other anecdotes, his fortean sense of the bizarre and absurd often rears its head. He relishes recounting early theories about earthquakes origins; for example that they show that the Earth floats on a vast ocean of water, or that it is riddled with unstable subterranean caverns, or even that quakes are, in fact, the result of explosions in the sky. He also explores the idea that animals are capable of predicting earthquakes, although he finds this somewhat short on evidence.

The writing style makes this book enormously accessible. It is concise, clear and casually conversational, a trick that looks effortless, but is enormously difficult to pull off. When reading Musson's account of how seismologists interpret seismic waves to differentiate quakes from quarry blasts, underwater explosions and anything else that shakes the planet, or his explanation of the complexities of geological fault behaviour, this makes potentially baffling science remarkably easy to digest. This may not be the definitive volume on earthquakes, but it is one of the most accessible and enthralling books on the subject.

Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict

SCIENCE, SEISMOLOGY AND FORTEANA JOINED SEAMLESSLY **9**

The Essential Dowsing Guide

Dennis Wheatley

Ozark Mountain Publishing

Pb, 123pp, illus, £6.99, ISBN 9781886940383

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £6.99

Dennis Wheatley (not the occult novelist) was a renowned master dowser and teacher. His definitive guide, originally published as *The Principles of Dowsing*, was out of print for many years so this new edition is a welcome return. Well written, clear and concise, it makes fascinating reading, whatever one's prior opinion of dowsing. Inspired by the work of Guy Underwood, Tom Lethbridge and Hamish Miller, there is a strong bias towards the 'Earth Mysteries' dowsing of ancient sites, standing stones and 'energy lines'. One particularly interesting chapter on water divining is based on the notes and papers Wheatley inherited from Underwood.

Starting from the basics, with instructions for making coat-hanger dowsing rods, we are led through many styles and techniques of dowsing, such as the use of pendulums – for dowsing maps, as a method of divination, or even for finding lost items around the house. Each chapter concludes with tips and exercises for developing one's own dowsing skill and accuracy. Wheatley explores some of dowsing's history and cites a good deal of research into how it may work. For anyone wishing to learn to dowse, this is indeed an essential guide.

Steve Marshall

Fortean Times Verdict

EVERYTHING YOU COULD EVER NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DOWSING **8**

Gravity

Why What Goes Up, Must Come Down

Brian Clegg

Duckworth Overlook 2012

Hb, 336pp, notes, index, £14.99, ISBN 9780715643600

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £13.49

The force of gravity has been a mystery every since people realised the Earth wasn't at the centre of the Universe (before that time, there was no mystery: it was just the natural tendency of heavy objects to fall downwards). Newton came up with an explanation that worked in a Copernican Universe, but only at the expense of creating a bigger mystery: action at a distance. While Einstein eventually found a way round this, his solution was inconsistent with quantum physics. The ultimate solution of the mystery, a theory of quantum gravity, remains elusive to this day – as does the half-science, half-pseudoscience notion of antigravity.

Brian Clegg covers the history of the subject in a way that is easily accessible to the layman, while avoiding many of the myths and oversimplifications usually encountered. If the book has a fault, it is that it lacks narrative momentum: resolutions to problems are presented before the reader has been sufficiently tantalised with the problems themselves. The author also has a strange reluctance to use diagrams, which in subjects like this really are worth a thousand words.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict

A COMPETENT ACCOUNT, BUT SLOW-MOVING AT TIMES **8**

The Natural Death Handbook

Ru Callender at al

Strange Attractor Press 2012

Boxed set of three books, illus, £24.00, ISBN 9781907222146

AVAILABLE ONLY FROM NATURALDEATH.ORG.UK

Possibly not strictly fortean throughout, but a handsome production, properly edited, with vast amounts of useful advice, some of it fairly off-putting (removing catheters post mortem, for example) and some just things you tend not to consider – corpses' Ken and Barbie pinkness is due to chemicals and essential oils mask inevitable smells. The writing on death (psychedelics and dying, funerary masks, a history of modern death, dancing around the bonefire) is fascinating, and there is a directory of services.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict

MAKING THE INEVITABLE MORE REWARDING **9**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

THE MARTIANS HAVE LANDED

A History of Media-Driven Panics and Hoaxes

Robert E Bartholomew and Benjamin Radford

McFarland 2012

Pb, 254pp, bib, notes, ind, $40.00, ISBN 9780786464982

Building on his academic work investigating the psychology and sociology of 'mass hysteria', Bartholomew continues to reinvent the way in which these topics are presented and discussed. This latest volume (co-written by and edited with *Skeptical Inquirer* editor Benjamin Radford) analyses 36 well-documented media-created scares and panics, many of which have been chronicled in these pages. He provides a compact history and discussion of the initial story, its players and investigators, and its growth and influence. The range is very broad: the non-existent 'London riot' of 1926; the Welles 'Martian invasion' broadcast; Parkinson's *Ghostwatch*; escaped wild animals; suffocation in the tail of Halley's comet, and falling asteroids and satellites; batmen on the Moon; the Australia's 'Hook' and Taiwan's 'Slasher'; Morgellon's disease, bird flu and panics over vaccination; Internet virus scares, video nasties; organ thefts; hurricane Katrina evacuee myths; the Crying Boy painting and other curses; panics over satanic cults, sinister strangers, and sharks; the Chupacabras, 'chemtrails' and 'secret government' conspiracies; photographs of Jesus; and many more. This makes a great reference for researchers and those following mass panics.

UNEXPLAINED!

Strange Sightings, Incredible Occurrences, and Puzzling Physical Phenomena

Jerome Clark

Visible Ink Press 2012

Pb, 500pp, illus, notes, ind, $22.95, ISBN 9781578593446

Jerry Clark is a treasure of the fortean world. He has been a writer and researcher since the 1960s. Although he has been prominent in the UFO field, he considers himself a fortean first and foremost; certainly this view informs his writing and his approach to the fortean canon of mysteries. This is a very professional compendium of 64 selected topics from one of the field's masters, a third edition, much revised and expanded since its first incarnation in 1993. Clark's introductory essay is worth the price of admission alone and should be read by all forteans. He discusses the importance of testimony, the clash between narratives of extraordinary experiences and the demand for tangible proof, and the social processes involved in disseminating accounts of anomaly reports. He asks: "Is it possible to believe one's informants without believing their explanations?" Clark's comments and conclusions are considered and well argued. At numerous points in his detailed accounts of classic fortean phenomena, he is forced to conclude that the search for (or insistence upon) a single, all-encompassing answer is wrong in intention and result. The true nature of an anomaly is to be ambiguous and reflective, telling us more about its perceivers and explainers than it does about the world. Clark also provides definitive investigations of some of those persistent "bogus photos and pseudomysteries" that litter our subject. It's a critical (in all senses) book; get it, read it and be better informed for it.

LETTERS TO FATHER CHRISTMAS

J R R Tolkien, ed. Baillie Tolkien

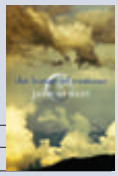
Harper Collins 2012

Hb, 192pp, illus, £12.99, ISBN 9780007463374

This timely republication of Tolkien's enchanting missives written to his children in the guise of Father Christmas and the Polar Bear, supposedly direct from their home at the North Pole, is lavishly illustrated with digital reproductions of the drawings and letters themselves. Written every December from 1920 onwards and spanning the two decades up to 1943, *Letters from Father Christmas* captures the child-like tone of *The Hobbit* and is crafted in Tolkien's wonderfully spidery calligraphy. There are also fascinating little snippets into family life and events of the time. In 1939, for instance, Father Christmas writes: "Things are very difficult this year owing to this horrible war. Many of my messengers have never come back". Replete with a goblin alphabet and copious colour pictures and sketches which display the author's (so often underestimated) refreshing, gentle wit, the book makes a perfect stocking filler for children of all ages – or at least children "whose appreciation of new worlds hasn't been blighted by Action Man and enlightened schoolteachers", as Sir Terry Prachett so aptly put it.

FORTEAN FICTION

The House of Rumour



Jake Arnott

Sceptre 2012

Hb, £17.99, 403pp, ISBN 9780340922729

Initially *The House of Rumour*'s 22 episodes, each named after a Major Arcana Tarot card, appear unconnected, but links soon begin to appear: the viewpoint character in one is mentioned in another, an historical scene is recalled in a later scene. Seamlessly blending real and fictional characters, the novel is the perfect working-through of the idea of six degrees of separation, that we are all connected in an intricate web of interlocking threads, and also of jonbar hinges, moments when a choice dramatically affects the future.

Several stories run through it from the 1940s onwards. One is of Rudolf Hess flying from Germany to Scotland to try to create peace. Another is of the involvement of the secret services (including a young Ian Fleming) in various clandestine schemes during World War II: infiltrating British anti-semites, feeding German leaders false astrological information and recruiting Aleister Crowley for nefarious purposes.

And another is of the character whose story weaves through the novel: a young science fiction writer called Larry Zagorski who in the 1940s hangs out in Los Angeles with Robert Heinlein, L Ron Hubbard and rocket scientist and occultist Jack Parsons. He and fellow writers and their friends and lovers and children spread like branches of a tree into the coming decades, their paths crossing from time to time.

An actress who married Larry becomes involved in the group receiving messages from the Space Brothers, later the subject of Leo Festinger's sociological study. She finds her salvation in a religious movement run by the Rev Jim Jones; later she finds her death in the Jonestown massacre in Guyana – but her young son escapes and feeds back into the story.

It's hugely complex and multi-layered, and I suspect some of the patterns would only become apparent after a second reading, but it's meticulously researched, cram full of fortean themes and a thoroughly satisfying read.

David V Barrett

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FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

Ghost Stories for Christmas

Dir Lawrence Gordon Clark, et al, UK 1968-2006

BFI, £49.99

There's always been, for me, a pleasing nostalgia about M R James's stories. People rightly baulk at the description of his work as cosy, but there is something paradoxiaclly comforting, I maintain, about his tales of solitude and malevolent horror. It's not the content, perhaps, so much as the form. The orally transmitted tale presupposes a teller, and for many people that teller was a parent or well-meaning schoolmaster. Most people encounter James with an intense feeling of excitement in their schooldays, and he sticks with them for life. A similar sense of nostalgia, of longing for a return to childhood, is stirred by the BBC's *Ghost Stories for Christmas*, released here on five fine discs by the BFI. The best of these films are based on James's work and were made in the 1970s by Lawrence Gordon Clark. For me, they're of a piece with *Jackanory*, Tom Baker's *Doctor Who* and *The Phantom Raspberry Blower of Old London Town*.

Clark is an appropriately modest, softly spoken man to have bought James to the screen and he's a thoroughly likeable and thoughtful companion to his own films. His admission that he got hooked on James when his father read the stories to him as a boy is one of several charming insights and opinions that he offers in the brief interviews that precede each of the films he made. They are, in chronological order: *The Stalls of Barchester* (1971), *A Warning to the Curious* (1972), *Lost Hearts* (1973), *The Treasure of Abbott Thomas* (1974), *The Ash Tree* (1974) *The Signalman* (based on a Dickens short story, 1976) and *Stigma* (1977), a contemporary, specially written teleplay by Clive Exton that compares unfavourably with its predecessors.

Landscape and place are tremendously important elements in James's stories and Clark shows the same sensitivity to location in his films. The broad, lonely north Norfolk beach in *A Warning to the Curious* might not be the shingly strand of Aldeburgh that James had in mind when he wrote his story, but it works brilliantly on the small screen. And in making the change Clark knew exactly what he was doing. "It's a film," he says, "where the subject is terrorised not by claustrophobia, but by wide open spaces" – an observation, I think, that gets to the heart of why East Anglia plays such an important part in James's haunted world.

A Warning to the Curious is arguably Clark's best James film, helped by a marvellously lugubrious central performance by Peter Vaughan as Paxton. And the effectiveness of its ending perhaps gave rise to a temptation to make some of the stories even bleaker than James intended. *The Treasure of Abbott Thomas* for instance becomes a dire warning against overweening rationalism as Michael Bryant's Somerton is wheeled away at the end by some unspeakable undead cleric.

But, really, all Clark's adaptations stand up well beside the stories on which they're based and all bear repeated viewings. The cast lists are a roll call of British television acting talent. Robert Hardy (*The Stalls of Barchester*), Edward Petherbridge (*The Ash Tree*), Michael Bryant (*Abbott Thomas*), Peter Vaughan and Clive Swift (*A Warning to the Curious*), and Denholm Elliott (*The Signalman*) all convincingly carry their respective stories. And there's a deliciously crazy peformance from Joseph O'Conor as Mr Abney in *Lost Hearts*.

As in James's tales, the little cameo parts stick in the head too: David Cargill as the boots in *A Warning to the Curious* almost deserves a spin off series of his own. And Barbara Ewing makes for an unexpectedly sexy Mrs Mothersole in *The Ash Tree*. Am I being blinded by nostalgia when I say that British TV acting today simple isn't as good as it was then?

Clark admits at one point that despite his best efforts, BBC drama budgets at the time were lamentably small and this does show at times. James doesn't demand too much by way of special effects but it would have been nice if the carvings in Barchesters' stalls could have moved more subtly and convincingly. And Mrs Mothersole's grotesque offspring are, I suspect, as likely to provoke laughter as shudders.

In contrast with O'Conor and his almost over-the-top cavorting is Christopher Lee, some of whose solo performances of James's stories filmed in 2000 are included as extras on the discs. They strike me now as rather ponderous – long on academic gravitas, short on donnish wit. Lee made clear that he wasn't attempting an impersonation of James when he made these films, but the producers clearly try to recreate the atmosphere and conditions in which the tales were originally told – on Christmas Eve, after Chapel in King's College Cambridge. The candles, the claret jug, the panelled room, the roaring fire all ring true, but the awestruck silence of the audience and solemnity of the storyteller deaden the tales, and quite miss the humour and playfulness that is such an essential part of James's world.

Also included in this five-disc boxed set are the two films of *Oh, Whistle, and I'll come to you my lad*, both of which will continue to divide viewers and James fans alike. For me, Jonathan Miller's 1968 adaptation with Michael Hordern is the most frightening piece of television I've ever seen, while the 2010 'version' that borrowed the title of James's story and little else, is as irritating a travesty as has ever been filmed.

Clark reveals in one of the interviews that in the late 1970s he had a script for the Swedish-set story 'Count Magnus' written and ready to make, but that there was never the money to do it. I can think of no better way for the BBC to atone for the misdeeds of its overpaid celebrity staff than to immediately give him a blank cheque to make this film in time for next Christmas.

Robert Lloyd Parry

Fortean Times Verdict

THE PERFECT WAY TO SPEND A GHOSTLY CHRISTMAS **9**

Manimal

Dir various, US 1983
Fabulous Films, £34.99

There are many reasons to devote space to a series that ran for just eight episodes and that few have heard of and even fewer seen.

Firstly, almost everyone involved went on to bigger things. Simon McCorkindale (Dr Jonathan Chase), an impossibly handsome and charming Englishman, found international recognition in *Falcon Crest*, before spending his final decade in residence in *Casualty/Holby City*. Creator/Producer Glen A. Larson was fresh from success with *Quincy MD* and would go on to be the prime mover behind *Knight Rider*, *The Fall Guy*, *Magnum P.I.* and *Battlestar Galactica*. Effects designer Stan Winston would become synonymous with the bleak sci-fi realms of *Terminator* and *Aliens*. Heck, even sidekick Brooke (Melody Anderson), went on to play Dale Arden, Flash Gordon's squeeze.

The series bombed because it went head-to-head on NBC with the behemoth that was *Dallas*, then half way through its 15-year run. No-one saw Manimal and it was axed.

So is it any good?

Absolutely – and unintentionally hilariously so.

Chase, a famed Professor of Criminology, can turn himself into any animal, but seems to favour panther, hawk or snake. Apparently trained animals were initially dragged around on location, and it's laugh-out-loud funny to see the baddies soil themselves as a monstrously large Black Panther dives only feet over their heads or a grizzly bear comes crashing through the door. This only stopped when the similarly monstrous costs being incurred were realised and had nothing to do with the actors' or animals' wellbeing. There's also the nice touch of fantasy heroes being cast against type; Ursula Andress and *FT* favourite Doug McClure make appearances as villains, as does a young and already sinister Robert Englund. Wonderful stuff.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict
A FORGOTTEN GEM OF 1980S FANTASY TELLY **8**

The Reverend's Review

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

RASPUTIN: THE MAD MONK / THE DEVIL RIDES OUT / THE MUMMY'S SHROUD

Dir Neil Jones, UK 2011
Studio Canal, £.99 each

Well, dearly beloved, this month brings monks, mummies and the Goat of Mendes ("The Devil himself!") as Hammer Horror continues its HD makeover. First up is *Rasputin: The Mad Monk*, in which the life story of Grigori Rasputin is recast as a pseudo-horror melodrama. Christopher Lee has an absolute blast playing the cruel and obnoxious monk who uses his healing powers to gain fame, fortune and a heck of a lot of wine. And, boy, does Lee knock it back in this. That's when he isn't stripping women, chopping people's hands off, or dancing and clapping to anything that sounds remotely like Tetris. There are some chilling moments, though. At one point he stares at a female character who he's become bored with and tells her to "Go and destroy yourself." When she does just that, he simply remarks: "What a good little girl." That was cold, Rasputin. Cold. It might take historical liberties, but Rasputin (pronounced Raspootin, not Raspewtin according to this film) is put together with such bug-eyed energy that it's hard not to fall under its spell.

Lee shows up again, in a rare good guy role, in *The Devil Rides Out*. Richard Matheson adapted the script from Dennis Wheatley's novel to create a superb and genuinely ripping yarn of Satanism in the Home Counties. The pace, tension, acting and atmosphere of the film make it one of Hammer's very best, and it contains genuine scares, despite some dodgy special effects (this restored print has updated the effect shots). Former Satanist writer Nikolas Schreck called the film "one of the most authentic portrayals of genuine magical practice and philosophy ever filmed." Plus, it's got a giant spider in it. What more do you want?

This trio of rather untypical Hammer Horrors is completed by *The Mummy's Shroud*. I tend to avoid shuffling Mummy movies (he was always my least favourite monster), so imagine my surprise when I found myself hooked. The story's nothing new. After all, Mummy films are just a forerunner of the slasher movie anyway: Slasher/Mummy is offended – Slasher/Mummy methodically murders people for the rest of the film – Slasher/Mummy dead? –The End. But it's done here with great acting and real directorial flare – plus for a studio that often liked to have a central hero fighting the titular foe, it's a rare example of a Hammer ensemble piece.

All three films are perhaps less than pristine in HD, but this is certainly the best they've ever looked, with some fascinating and well-produced extras. These are three welcome additions to the Hammer restoration project. Pick of the bunch? *The Devil Rides Out*.

Fortean Times Verdict
TWO HAMMER GEMS AND ONE BONA FIDE CLASSIC **8**

Seeking a Friend for the End of the World

Dir Lorene Scafaria, USA 2012
Studio Canal, £19.99/£22.99

Perhaps too downbeat for moviegoers to really warm to; this apocalyptic romcom is sure to do big business on DVD, starring, as it does, this generation's trustworthy everyman Steve Carrell and the pout that is Keira Knightley.

Asteroid Matilda is going to hit the Earth in three weeks and we're all going to die. No contingency plans, just the certainty of the extinction of all life. And so law and order break down and people behave – well, much the same as now: the poor turn on each other and destroy what little they have, while those with money indulge their pathetic, repressed desires ("I want to do heroin to Radiohead'). All use sex as a form of basic communication and means of commerce, without fear of disease or pregnancy.

Essentially a road movie about middle-age crisis, the Apocalypse is merely a backdrop for asking questions about second chances in Love. Dodge (Carrell), is safe and reserved, Penny (Knightley), a young, hyperactive, extrovert rock-chick (although so androgynous/boyish you sometimes wonder whether it's a woman Dodge is looking for at all.) Do opposites attract? The fact Penny's taste in music runs to Leonard Cohen, Lou Reed and Scott Walker should be the clue that she's up for some moany old-git action.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict
IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AND EVEN YOU CAN GET LAID **8**

The Raid

Dir Gareth Evans, Indonesia 2011
Momentum Pictures, £17.99/£19.99

The Raid is one of those films in which the pre-release rumblings preceding it promise something rather special, straight out of left field – or, in this case, the East. And the raves about Welsh director Gareth Evans's fully-loaded head-kicking fest are more than justified. *The Raid* is an exhilarating thrill-ride – an unremittingly violent, brutal, wince-inducing martial arts ballet of surpassing impact and flair.

In the heart of one of Jakarta's most deprived slums, an impenetrable high-rise apartment block stands, 30 floors of Hell, home to the city's most dangerous scumbag criminals and killers and overseen by a ruthless crime king landlord. An elite SWAT team is sent in, in a pre-dawn raid, to infiltrate the building and execute an ACME Pest Control-like clearout of it, floor by floor. Barely have the SWAT team entered the tower block than they are fighting for their lives to get out again.

The plot, as it transpires, is actually more sophisticated than that. Iko Uwais's young SWAT team member Rama has left his wife and child behind him, and in moments of extreme danger and imminent demise finds he has little else left to draw on except his memory of them. Crucially, you become emotionally invested in the man. Meanwhile, all is not simply as it seems in the blood-drenched Hotel Jakarta. Uwais also provides the jaw-dropping fight choreography (he's probably already named his price in Hollywood). There are so many astonishing set pieces it's hard to know where to start.

Talking of starting, once this film does so it simply will not let up, with one stunning fight sequence after another, be it with fists or automatic machine guns. It isn't easy to escape the spirit of Bruce Lee and there is perhaps a nod to the pagoda tower in his unfinished *Game of Death* and the soul-purging trial by combat in that film.

A Welshman based in Jakarta. There's something slightly surreal about the conjunction and the film itself – with its beautifully choreographed violence – becomes hypnotic and takes on the character of the surreal. In action film terms, for expectations of panache, savagery and impact, *The Raid* raises the bar and smashes you over the head with it.

A host of features accompany both the DVD and Blu-ray release, the latter containing the US and original uncut versions of the film.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
A WELSHMAN IN INDONESIA = SURREAL SET PIECES GALORE **8**

SHORTS

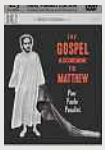
THE PACT

(Entertainment One, £15.99/£19.99)

For once, I concur with the mob. *The Pact* is very good indeed. First time director Nicholas McCarthy mixes beautifully-framed 'creepy' longshots with in-your-face close-ups, all shot through a beige filter; California has never looked so drab and washed-out, and the whole film reeks of invasion and intrusion. But is the film – in which a young woman returns to her recently deceased mother's home to find her sister missing and spooky goings-on – a haunted-house story or serial-killer thriller? Watch and thrill to Caity Lotz's defiant Annie, the most effortlessly sexy horror heroine in years, who appears in every scene and (if there's justice in the horror universe) will achieve cult status and deserved recognition. *The Pact* is genuinely frightening, embodying old-fashioned horror values, such as knowing the right time for a 'jump'-moment and/or random act of violence, and is underpinned by solid performances and an atmospheric soundtrack. **TC 8/10**

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

(Eureka Entertainment, Dual Format Edition £16.99)

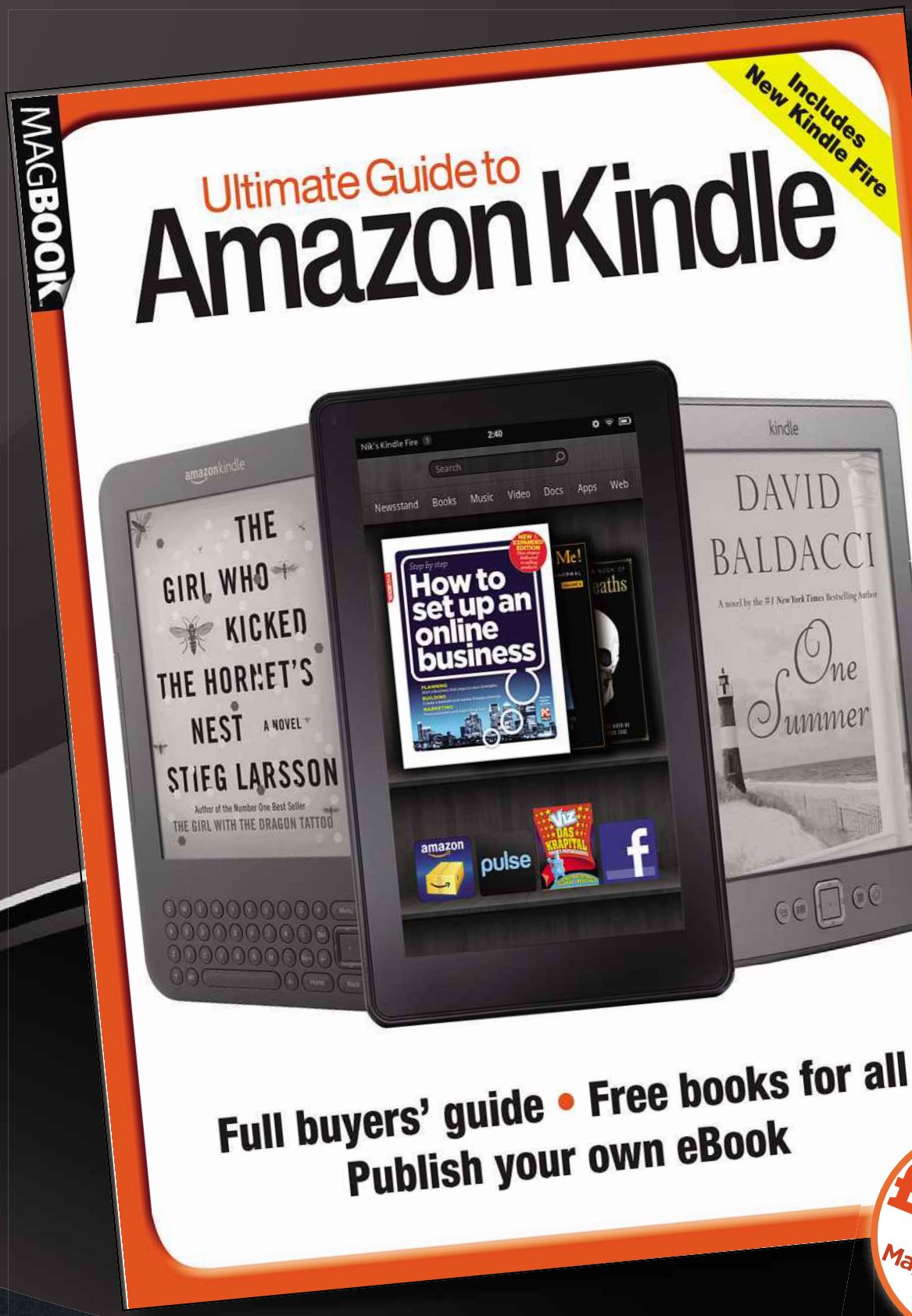


A Marxist poet's (and avowed atheist's) take on the second Gospel (there's pointedly no 'Saint' in the title of Pasolini's film), this remains an astonishing work, caught on the cusp between its director's Neo-Realist roots and his later more oblique, poetic style. A million miles from the comfortable pieties and widescreen tableaux of the Hollywood biblical epic, *Matthew* employs documentary-style black-and-white cinematography, non-professional actors and narrative disjunctions to create a sense of intimacy and immediacy in its telling of the story of Christ, using only words from scripture and an eclectic soundtrack; revolutionary stuff, and never looking better than on this excellent dual format release. A substantial bonus is the rarely seen hour-long film *Sopralluoghi in Palestina* in which Pasolini travels through Palestine with Don Andrea Carraro in search of locations for his film, only to realise that he will have to 'reinvent' the Gospel from scratch elsewhere. **DS 9/10**

RED LIGHTS

(Momentum Pictures Home Entertainment, £15.99/£19.99)

When a film is described as "this year's *Sixth Sense*" it just means the viewer spends the next two hours trying to spot the inevitable, and inevitably disappointing, Shyamalam-like twist, before throwing the remote across the room in disgust when it's all over. No Bruce Willis here, though; instead, we get Sigourney Weaver and her irritatingly Prof Brian Cox-alike sidekick (Cillian Murphy) as a pair of fearless academic skeptics who live only to bust the likes of Psychic Sally and be rude to the head of the supposedly over-funded parapsychology department (what weird parallel universe does this film take place in, I hear you ask?). We also get quite a lot of thinly-disguised references to various famous parapsychological cases (from Ted Serios to Nina Kulagina) that forteans will have fun (one takes ones pleasure where one can) spotting. The main story arc follows our intrepid duo of debunkers as they seek to expose celebrity psychic Simon Silver (Robert de Niro) as a big old fake as if the future of the planet somehow depended on it. The final twist merely makes a nonsense of what was already only barely intelligible. **DS 4/10**



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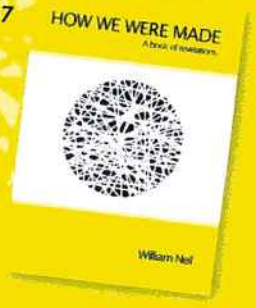
Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007



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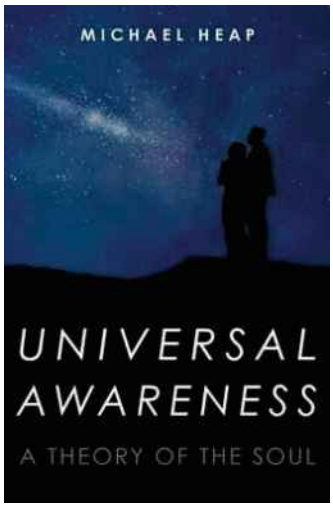

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About the author:
Michael Heap is a clinical and forensic psychologist, an internationally recognised authority on hypnosis, and a prolific writer and speaker on skepticism. His website is http://www.mheap.com/

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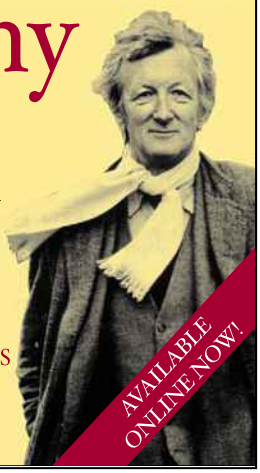

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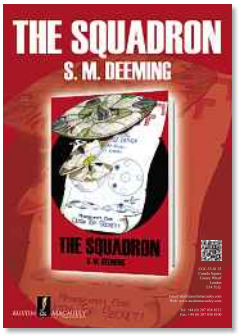

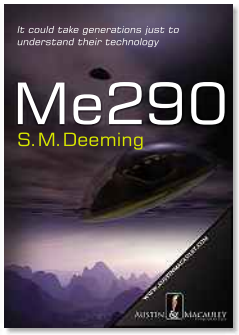

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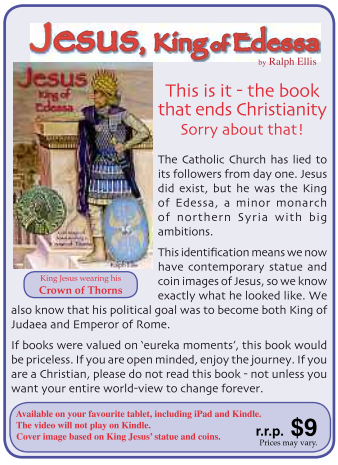
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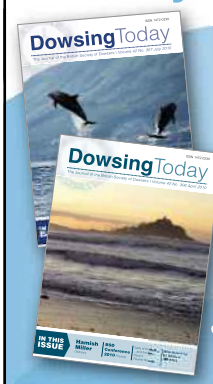

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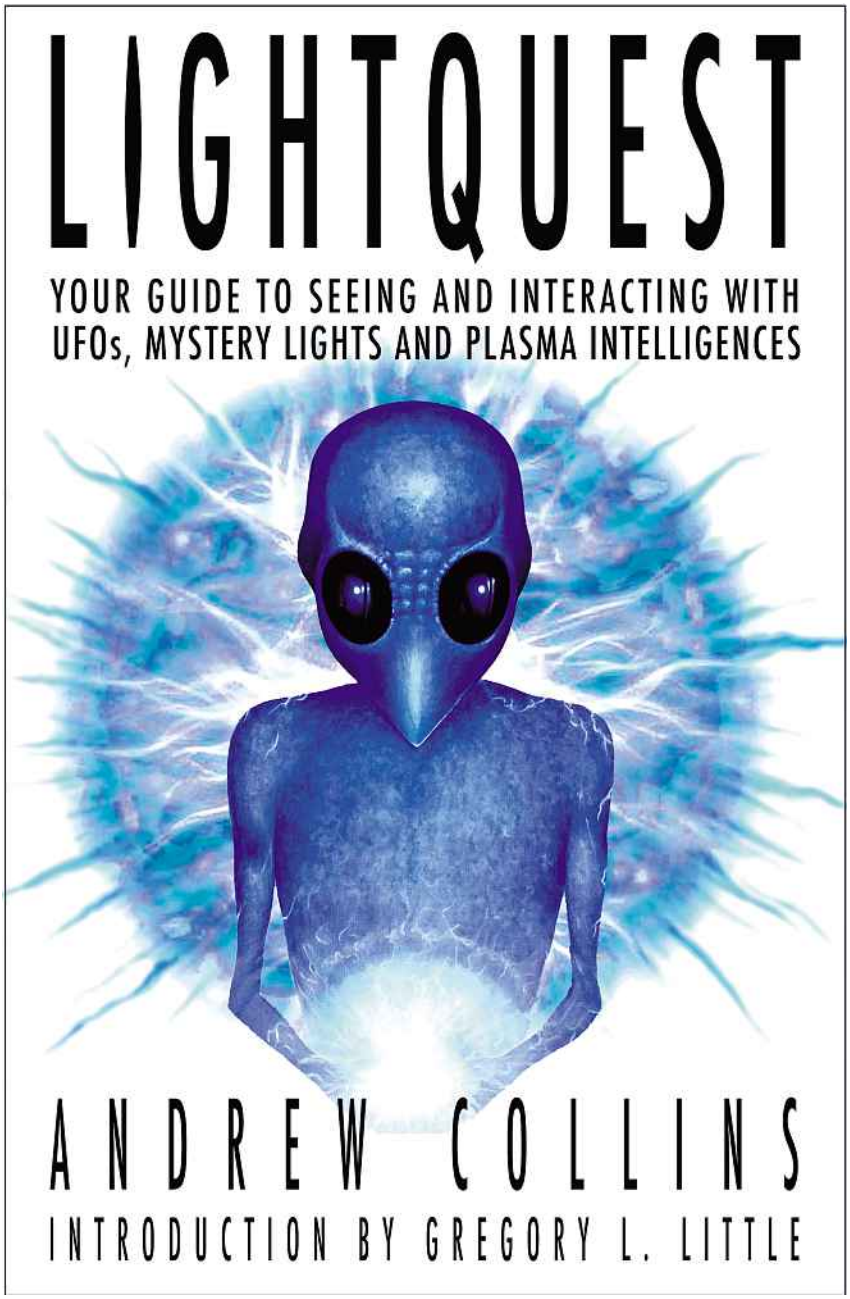
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ANDREW COLLINS
INTRODUCTION BY GREGORY L. LITTLE

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Dear FT...

letters

Brain and mind

In response to Sarah Louise [**FT294:71**] regarding the nature of consciousness, I would take the speculation one step further. Let's say the brain isn't the organ of consciousness but rather a sophisticated receiver of the same from a dimension higher than those we experience, rather like the way wi-fi works only more profound. Using this premise, one can 'explain' an awful lot of phenomena (strange or otherwise) such as dreams, ghosts, intuition, synchronicity, past lives, collective consciousness, and so on. Maybe mankind is the biological extension of this consciousness. We're not separate from it, we *are* it. It's worth thinking about.

Mike Bending
Penshurst, Kent

Neglected octopus

The article about Paul the octopus [**FT295:48-51**] reminded me of a passage in Andrew Solomon's book about depression, *The Noonday Demon* (2001, p.257): "I was fascinated to hear of the suicide of an octopus, trained for a circus, that had been accustomed to do tricks for rewards of food. When the circus was disbanded, the octopus was kept in a tank and no one paid any attention to his tricks. He gradually lost colour (octopuses' states of mind are expressed in their shifting hues) and finally went through his tricks a last time, failed to be rewarded, and used his beak to stab himself so badly that he died..."

Richard George
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Grisly attraction

The proposed Jeffrey Dahmer tour in Milwaukee [**FT292:9**] reminded me of a story I heard during a ghost hunt last year. In September 1834, John Nicholas Steinberg of Islington in London killed his wife and four children before killing himself. His nocturnal burial in Clerkenwell poor ground attracted a considerable crowd. In line with contemporary superstition, his head was beaten with a wooden mallet and he was buried face-down. The landlord re-let the Steinbergs' house. The new tenants left it exactly as it had been when the bodies were found, and installed wax dummies clothed in the victims' bloodstained garments. On the fist day of the 'exhibition', they made £50. Eventually, public opinion closed it down.

Steven Mackfall
Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland

We stand corrected

For a couple of decades, I have been an avid reader of your most excellent publication, and it is more than twice that time since I last studied Latin at school. However, whilst reading "The Birth of the Poltergeist" [**FT293:39**] I was surprised to see "Tu omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius, scilicet Filii tui" rendered as "If the Devil has any power over me, let him show it!" I believe this quotation is a reference to the *Book of Hebrews*, chapter 2, verse 8: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." I suggest that the appendage "scilicet Filii tui" would translate as: "namely, your Son [i.e. Jesus]". Perhaps Luther's large black sow threw hazelnuts at whoever was setting up the page for the printers?

Jenny Hillier
West Hartlepool, Co. Durham

Passenger pigeons

I had this thought concerning the extinction of the passenger pigeon: in the 19th century, the chestnut blight wiped out billions of chestnut trees in North America. An entire ecosystem was demolished. Twenty years later the decline of the Passenger Pigeon population began. Was the tree a source of food (I'm thinking catkins, the tree flower) or maybe it was needed in reproductive requirements?

Robert Whitaker-Sirignano
Smyrna, Delaware

Karl Shuker comments: It's an interesting idea but the wholesale, prolonged slaughter of the pigeons by hunters, in which untold millions of birds in North America were shot, is what sent the species plummeting into extinction. No species could hope to survive such sustained slaughter spanning decades. The last specimen of Ectopistes migratorius *died in Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.*

Simulacra Corner

During a trip to the little island of Grinda, some two hours sailing east of Stockholm in Sweden, Lars Thomas came across an old tree with all kinds of strange creatures coming out of it. In one place there was the head of a manatee emerging from the trunk, while on the other side there was "a strange goblin-like creature with a smooth arm, but a rather weird hairdo, and a backpack of a somewhat strange appearance".

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letters

I saw the iceman

Regarding the Minnesota Iceman, mentioned in the review of Brian Regal's *Searching for Sasquatch* [**FT293:62**]: I saw the exhibit called 'the Iceman' in late September 1964 at the State Fair of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City. I was six years old then and recall it quite clearly. I was a cynical child, not taken in by horror movies or carnival illusions. My father was a civilian employed as an Air Force programmes analyst and he raised me with great scepticism for anything not documented.

I decline to speculate exactly what the Iceman was, but I do believe that it/he was a carcass of some sort. The exhibit was located in the south-east quadrant of the fairgrounds, among other carnival attractions. The vehicle was not the truck illustrated in "The Abominable Showman" by Ian Simmons [**FT83:34-37,** Oct-Nov 1995**]**, but it was a primarily white trailer, or possibly a truck-trailer combination. There was a large noisy diesel generator that emitted diesel fumes. The exhibit cost 25 cents, considerably more than most, which cost 10 cents.

The trailer's interior was about 8ft by 12ft (2x4m), and a large freezer case took up most of the room inside. There was about a 2ft (60cm) -wide path around it. The walls were covered with maps and posters. I couldn't read on an adult level, but I waited until a man was reading one of the descriptive posters to another child and listened in. I recall the gist of the story as being that the Iceman had been shot by a fishing trawler crewman off the coast of Siberia, perhaps on or near an ice floe, and that the fishermen had frozen it/him in a compartment of the ship used to transport fish in ice. They took it/him to some East Asian seaport (Hong Kong, I believe). That is all I recall overhearing.

The flooring was rickety, of corrugated metal, and I could see the ground through the gaps in it. The weather that day was damp and misty. The smell of diesel was strong. My friend Dwayne and I nudged up as close as we could to the freezer case, with our chins right up against the railing. It/he was a frozen cadaver, resembling an oversized, hairy-bodied man, only of a musculature, height and dimension about 10 per cent to 25 per cent larger than human, especially the bone structure of the face. It/he was covered by about 4-12in (10-30cm) of ice; that in turn was covered by some kind of thick glass or plastic, fastened down by Phillips-head screws into the metal freezer case.

I remember the face quite clearly. The features were broad, heavy and muscular, neither those of a gorilla nor a normal man. The eye sockets were sunken, and the right eye mostly obscured by the opacity of the ice. I stood about 12in/30cm to 18in/45cm away from the left eye, staring for about five minutes, and remember it most vividly. There was what I would now call an exit bullet wound right on the process of the left zygomatic arch.

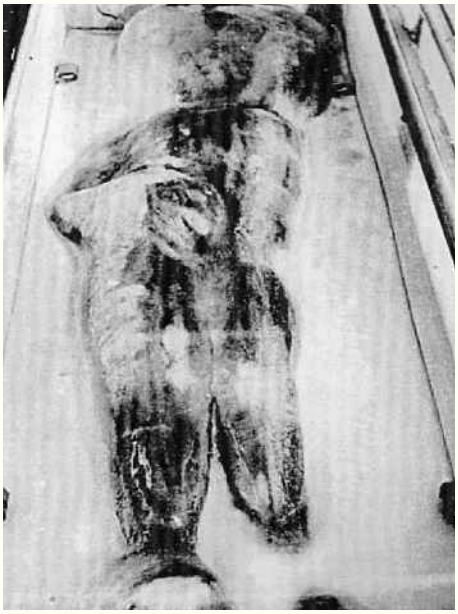
The left cheek looked as though the bone inside was crushed, with a pinkish, depressed wound in the middle. I looked at it from every possible angle, and I clearly saw about an inch-long wisp of reddish pinkish swirl emitted from the wound frozen into the ice, exactly like the blood one might see in a congealed block of frozen fish.

The left eye was slightly open and of a light colour, greyish green. Its/his colouring was what I would call European, with auburn hair. Most of the body was covered with hair, some like lanugo, some like that of a hirsute man's chest, none of it like that of an animal. I saw the insertions of dozens, perhaps hundreds of hairs, also the texture of the skin, both exactly like those of a middle-aged Caucasian man. I have designed and manufactured ocular and facial prosthetics for patient use and I do not believe that the Iceman was of prosthetic technology.

At our six-year-old height, Dwayne and I were positioned to sniff right along the edge of the freezer case, and we took turns breathing in deeply right near the Iceman's left armpit. It stank of decomposition. We made jokes about the Iceman's smelly armpit. The exhibit was crowded and other people commented on the awful odour.

I think the Iceman was indeed a frozen cadaver of some sort, although I don't venture to presume whether it/he was a pathetic, malformed human or something else. I would place little credence in Frank Hansen's narrative – though a farmer, he claimed not to recognise the smell of putrefaction! And then there's the coy "many years ago…" I wonder what a through examination of bank, tax, property and vehicle registration records would bring to light.

Doris Tomlin
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Were sheep

Stuart Ferrol's description of a 'half-man half-sheep' entity seen by Nellie Dodd after the discovery of the Hexham Heads [**FT294:46**] reminded me of an archæological site I worked on at Mirfield, West Yorkshire, in 2006. Despite the comedic potential of this 'were-sheep', one of the finds from the area was an Iron Age or early Romano-British stone head – which featured a carving of a human head backed by the head of a ram. In other words, a representation of a 'half-man half-sheep entity' apparently dating from the same period as the Hexham Heads.

Little is known about the Mirfield head, unfortunately – it had been lost prior to 2006 and its listing in the West Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER no.6849) was sketchy. It had been recovered, at an unrecorded date, from a drystone field boundary wall in the vicinity of Five Thorns Well, to the south of Leeds Road. The well itself was marked on Mirfield's 1798 enclosure map and on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map, but was subsequently destroyed when the area was excavated for brick clay. The whereabouts of the head prior to it being incorporated into the boundary wall are unknown.

Mrs Dodd, unsettled by the discovery of the Hexham Heads, is perhaps more likely to have awoken suddenly from a nightmare than to have been menaced by a Brigante were-sheep. The Mirfield head, however, does suggest that a similar entity may indeed have formed part of the belief system of the Iron Age or Romano-British north. Maybe this is something that Stuart Ferrol could examine further without "raising the ire of archæologists"?

Mark Stenton
Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Dental inspection

The alleged abduction of Betty and Barney Hill on the evening of 19 September 1961 is one of the great classics from UFO lore. Betty Hill described in detail the appearance of her alien abductors. Following her examination, she claims she had a long conversation with the lead alien about

where they were from. When her husband rejoined her, the aliens had his false teeth in their hands and asked Betty if her teeth came out, too.

I read somewhere that a 'debunker' claimed this entire scenario was either imagined or dreamt by the Hills after they watched an episode of *The Outer Limits* – but this TV show didn't premier until 1963. However, the Hills' story about the aliens' fascination with Barney's false teeth reminded me of an episode from the popular TV comedy *I Love Lucy* entitled 'Women From Mars' in which Lucille Ball masqueraded as an alien for a publicity stunt and inspected a terrified bystanders' teeth.

◆ "Tales From The Vault" [**FT292:80**] recalls an incident reported by Janet and Colin Bord where two friends of theirs were walking on a path between fields outside Rearsby, Leicestershire, in "a very cold wind, then, for a split second, we both felt a warm breeze on our faces" [**FT38:59**]. In her book *Alien Invasion*, the late Ellen Crystall cites a similar occurrence she experienced in a field while investigating UFO activity near Pine Bush, New York. The few people who lived near the field complained of 'industrial noises' at night – sounds of generators, drills coming from underground. Ms Crystall's companion explained that the warm blast of air they suddenly felt came from a hidden vent from an underground installation under construction by the aliens.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

A ghoul in Highgate

Alan Murdie's piece on the Highgate Vampire [**FT294:20-21**] reminded me of an incident related to me by a Highgate resident over 40 years ago. Dr Charlotte Bach lived in Langbourne Mansions on the Holly Lodge estate near the cemetery. She told me of a frightening encounter in the mid to late 1960s with a huge, towering, dark presence near the cemetery. She was visibly disturbed on recounting the event, raising her hands high to emphasise the height of the ghoulish figure. She herself was an imposing woman – squared-jawed, about 6ft (1.8m) tall and not, I thought, the sort of person easily intimidated.

It later turned out that "Charlotte Maria Beatrix Augusta Bach" was a bit of a shape-shifter herself. At her death from liver cancer in 1981, aged 61, she was found to be a man – Karoly Hajdu [pronounced Hoy-doo], a Hungarian émigré transvestite. I'd known her in the early 1970s when she was writing her magnum opus, *Homo Mutans – Homo Luminens*, a work concerned with the effects of sexual deviation on human evolution. On her behalf, I posted the 521-page typescript to Colin Wilson in 1970. Wilson wrote about Bach in several of his books after meeting her in London.

[Editor's note: championing Lamarck over Darwin, Bach argued that humans, in varying degrees, experience a pull towards becoming the opposite sex, and that this was the true engine of evolutionary change and the key to the proper understanding of culture. Backed up by a polymathic accumulation of supporting evidence and a forceful lecturing style, she constructed what she called the science of 'human ethology'. She published some works on this, but not *Homo Mutans – Homo Luminens*. See *The Misfits: A Study of Sexual Outsiders* (1989) by Colin Wilson, and *The Irresistible Con: The Bizarre Life of a Fraudulent Genius* (2004) by Francis Wheen.]

As an outsider in a strange land in the later 1940s, Hajdu had to establish an identity somehow in post-war England, flitting between various residences and jobs – barman, receptionist, book-keeper. He then assumed the title Baron Carl Hajdu and socialised with aristocrats at the Dorchester Hotel while living in Chelsea and Mayfair. He worked for a while as a hypnotherapist under the name Michael Karoly, and at the Stanislavsky Studio in Knightsbridge. *Hypnosis* by Michael Karoly was published in 1961.

In 1968 he adopted the persona of Dr Charlotte Bach, a supposed former lecturer at a university in Budapest, and worked as a dominatrix. She told me that she dabbled for a while with the notorious Mayfair-based cult known as the Process Church. By the time I knew her, she often assumed the title Baroness Hajdu if she wanted preference of some kind or entrée into exclusive circles. A truly remarkable person, affirming her theories by experiment as a work-in-progress. I don't know whether her ghoul pre-dated or coincided with David Farrant's initial 1960s werewolf sighting, or even if she knew Farrant, but it's interesting as an early Highgate report.

Terry Little
Sherborne, Dorset

The sealed room

On returning from a visit to one of his company's newly acquired depots, my husband surprised me with this simple yet at the same time intriguing story he'd been told by one of his colleagues. These guys aren't prone to fanciful storytelling and it's the low-key nature of it (no big scares or thrills) that seems to enhance its fortean nature. My husband works for a large company that is in the habit of buying up local, family-run tyre-fitting outfits that are being sold as the owner goes into retirement. His job recently required him to visit one of these depots, located in Fforestfach, just outside Swansea, and one of the guys who worked in the depot told him this story.

The depot had to be manned overnight to ensure the bays were ready to receive early morning deliveries of tyres. Health and safety requirements meant that staff had to work in pairs overnight in case there was an emergency. Whilst things were quiet one night in 2011, this guy and his colleague were reviewing storage space and noticed that a room appeared to be sealed off for no obvious reason. They knocked through a small section of the wall and one of the guys placed his torch inside the hole. He could just make out what appeared to be an empty room. It seemed crazy to lose this space unnecessarily, so it was agreed to remove the wall and make use of the additional storage space. Once the wall was knocked through, the builders found a room that appeared to have been untouched for many years with a very old-fashioned light fitting and not much else. Both depot workers were puzzled as to why a perfectly good storage space had been bricked up.

This would have been nothing more than of passing interest apart from what followed. The newly opened space came into use as intended; however, both men felt that the atmosphere was somehow 'different' when you entered the unsealed room. There was a tangible sense of 'heaviness', unlike the rest of the depot, which felt quite normal. While on one of their two-man night shifts, the pair witnessed the figure of a man in blue overalls standing in one of the aisles within the depot. This was in the early hours of the morning, in a locked-down depot, where no access was possible. The figure was there one minute and gone the next. This happened a couple of times during their night shifts, but according to their colleagues no one else had witnessed the figure prior to the opening of the sealed room.

Is it just a coincidence that the figure began to appear after the room was unsealed – or had he been appearing for years late at night, unwitnessed like some sort of modern day *genius loci*? My husband said there was a large, old safe that no one had a key for. Could its contents perhaps throw any light on the mystery of the sealed room and the figure in blue overalls? He asked his colleagues if they knew anything about the history of the building; all they knew was that the previous business had been around for a few generations but that the actual building predated the ownership of that business.

Vicky Holt
Whitefield, Manchester

"Sometimes people treat me as if I don't exist"

CAROL ISAACS

it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Graveyard lures

Are trace energies left in cemeteries by departed souls? I believe so and would like to support the theory by recounting two events that happened to me recently.

My grandmother died in 1996 and as I was working offshore I was unable to go to the funeral, something which had troubled me ever since. Two years ago [2010] I decided it was about time I visited the grave. I asked several relatives where it was, but no one could remember.

The day I entered the Eastern Cemetery in Arbroath [Scotland], the headstones were bathed in warm sunlight and I thought that I would find the grave in no time, but two hours of searching proved unsuccessful. However, I felt a kind of wellbeing unlike anything I had experienced before. I had no better luck the next time I tried on a stormy autumn day when leaves fluttered around the lines of headstones, but again I experienced an inexplicable light-headedness. After a while I thought I would give up and find the resting place from a website I had been told about.

A few weeks later I was about to check out the online site when I was strangely drawn to the cemetery – but once more I found nothing. I was about to leave as the light was fading when I heard my grandmother calling me. She was using the half-scolding voice she used when telling me to comb my hair before going off to school. I looked around unnerved as the leaves were still being blown about in the wind. Was I going mad? I went off in the direction of the voice and found I was only 30ft (9m) from the headstone. The stone itself was broken by the weather or something, but I could clearly read her name below that of my grandfather, whom I had never met.

The other event happened while I was driving through Dundee on my way home from a visit to Ninewells Hospital. I neared Balgay Hill, a wooded mound with two summits, one of which was where the Mills Observatory was sited, and felt the giddiness of the previous event return; so I turned into the driveway to the hill and parked the car. I climbed up to the observatory and had a look inside, but the building was clearly not the cause of the malady, so I left and crossed the Victorian iron bridge that linked the two parts of the hill. I entered the Western Necropolis (below) and knew that I had some connection with the place. (I was born in Dundee and brought up in Arbroath, which is some 18 miles/29km along the coast to the northeast.)

I wandered down a wide, spiral path with old headstones on both sides. In the distance to my left lay the wide river Tay. Suddenly I came to a large marble gravestone set back into the hillside and surrounded by mourners. An old Victorian horse-drawn hearse blocked the path where just a second before there had been nothing. I looked back at the mourners, who were dressed in Victorian clothes, and saw in the middle of them the coffin being lowered into the ground. Then the whole scene was gone.

I wiped the sweat from my forehead even though it was a cool day and stood looking at the grave, which was overgrown with grass. Had I been drawn there to witness the burial of this person? I didn't recognise the name – indeed, I had no relatives buried in the cemetery. Why was I there?

Graeme Winton
Arbroath, Angus

> "Not music. Just overlapping sounds. Wong, Wong, Wong – vibrating like cliché sc-fi music"

GRAEME WINTON

A strange tugging

A few years ago, my friend Dan and I wrote a script for a horror film called 'Eve's Demons'. In early April 2005 we were in the process of finishing it and were scouting for locations. We were in Worthing in West Sussex with a couple of girls called Sarah and Aisha whom we had cast in the film. We had met them through Dan's mother, a witch who ran a New Age shop. The four of us had been friends for a few months.

As we were sitting in my car eating ice cream, I noticed St Mary's Church on the opposite side of the road. As there was a church scene in 'Eve's Demons', I suggested we go and check it out and see if it was a suitable location for filming, so we finished eating and headed on over. By now it was 7.45 and pitch dark. Worthing was totally deserted, which was normal after 6pm when stores close. As we walked along the path towards the church door, Dan turned to me and said "What's that?" and Aisha said that she was also feeling something. Sarah said she was experiencing a weird tugging sensation – like someone was trying to pull her over from behind. Dan was feeling the same thing, as was Aisha. I felt nothing, apart from total bewilderment. They just stood there. Dan said he needed to leave as soon as possible or otherwise he would probably throw up. We got back to the car and the three of them were talking about what had happened. I was feeling pretty frustrated, as it seemed that the experience of a lifetime had just passed me by. After they recovered I dropped the girls off and then went to get some petrol before taking Dan home.

It occurred to me that, if the presence, or whatever it was, was in the churchyard three hours before, perhaps it would still be there, so I suggested that we go back and see if that was the case. Dan was totally against it, but I managed to talk him round. As we walked along the path, I asked him if he felt anything, and he said no. A few more steps down the moonlit path, and still nothing. Then, at exactly the same spot as before, he felt an unbearable

presence tugging him from behind, followed by the nausea. He turned and ran like a bat out of hell toward the churchyard gates, and I followed. Two weeks later he agreed to check out the place again. We walked down the church path, at the same time of evening, got to exactly the same spot and… nothing. Whatever it was, it had gone. Sarah and Aisha felt such fear and revulsion after what happened that they have never entered St Mary's Church since. Previously a robust sceptic of all things paranormal, Dan believes that something unexplained happened that night, as do Sarah and Aisha.

Paul Trigwell
West Sussex

An angel calls

In 1980 or 1981, when I was three or four, my family was living in a small, 100-year-old terraced house in the small town of Alnwick in Northumberland. In the kitchen I had a blackboard and had been drawing a picture of my house with my mother, father, my newborn sister and myself. It was a bright sunny day and I guess around noon. I remember turning round to find my mother to show her what I'd been doing and right there in front of me was an angel. Now I don't know why I thought it was an angel, other than that's what it told me it was.

It was around the same size as me. It didn't look like a person though, but appeared to be made up of clouds – there's no other way to describe it. I remember chatting to it – no words were said back to me out loud, but I kind of knew what it was thinking. It asked me about what I'd been drawing and if I was happy. I must have stood there for a good few minutes with it, then I got really excited and started bouncing up and down, saying it had to meet my mother. The angel said it couldn't do that, and quickly floated up and vanished. My mother came out from the front room only to be met with an over-excited kid trying to get upstairs to see where the angel went.

I was chatting to my mother years later about it, and she remembered the incident, and said around the same time some strange things had happened. A few times she'd woken up in the night to see me standing by her bed, but when she turned on the light nothing was there. One night she told my father. He seemingly woke up, looked at the small figure, said something along the lines of "Have you had a nightmare, John?" and fell back to sleep. My mother put her arm out to touch the figure and it just disappeared.

My mother likes a good story, but when she told me this she was deadly serious and, it seemed, quite reluctant to tell me.

John Pickard
By email

VIVIENNE TUFFNELL

Divine vision

I first went to Mont Saint Michel in 1980, aged only 14, and returning 30 years later felt strange. I returned as a part of an assignment for work. I took a group of 21 mixed-aged English schoolchildren and their two teachers for a five-day trip round France. On Sunday the 30 May 2010, the feast day of Joan of Arc and also Mother's Day in France, we arrived as the monks were ringing the bells for morning prayer. Drawn by a need to sit and find some inner peace, I chose a bench halfway down the abbey church and was surprised to find a couple of the older girls joined me. Incense began to fill the air, and music played. I shivered, that goosebumps moment when you feel God is very, very close, and you feel that if you look up at the right moment, you will see Him. Tears began to fill my eyes and I felt alarmed. I couldn't have an emotional meltdown here. I was in charge. The kids would think I was an idiot. I bit down hard on my need to cry and let myself detach from my emotions a little. To capture the moment, I held the camera above my head and snapped a few photos, so I could maybe later recall and give way to my feelings. Plainchant in French made the hairs on my body stand on end and the readings, caught in snatches because of my poor French, were like Sybil's leaves blown on the wind… "Before the hills were made, I knew you. I knew you in your mother's womb." I can't recall what book from the Bible they were from.

On the return Channel ferry on 1 June, we looked at photos. I'd snapped away and never actually looked at any of my own. The photo above was greeted with astonishment and awe. I am myself astonished and greatly moved. The window behind has no pattern in it; there isn't a figure in it, as far as I saw. You will have to take my word that this photo is unaltered; anyone who knows me also knows stuff like Photoshop is beyond me. I saw nothing when I took the photo. I know who I think the figure is. Everyone agreed that it's a sign – but a sign of what?

Vivienne Tuffnell
By email

See Ms Tuffnell's blog at: http://zenandtheartoftightropewalking.wordpress.com/2010/06/02/

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18. THE FIGHTING GHOST OF TONDU

Today, Tondu is an obscure Welsh village, situated on the Bridgend to Maesteg railway line, three miles north of Bridgend. It enjoyed a considerable industrial boom in Victorian times, with large ironworks and collieries, as well as becoming a railway junction for coal trains. Its fortune and prosperity seem to have been waning already in 1904, when Tondu acquired one of its most sinister inhabitants. For some time, there had been talk of the disused colliery at Ynisawdre being haunted. On an early September morning in 1904, some workmen saw a tall spectre, shrouded in white, in the neighbourhood of Felinfach. When the ghost glided towards them with a drawn-out 'Boo!', its great black sockets that took the place of eyes fixed straight ahead, all 12 sturdy Welsh miners took to their heels. When they dared to look back, the ghost had disappeared.

Not long after, another Welshman was taking a midnight walk down the lonely, narrow road adjoining the deserted buildings and coke ovens of the abandoned Ynisawdre colliery. At the far end of a tunnel he was astonished to see a tall, cadaverous figure waiting for him, all shrouded in while. The head resembled a skull covered with wrinkled parchment; the eyes were hollow sockets, with a cavernous glow. Suddenly, the ghost ran up to the terrified Welshman, its long arms outstretched. It grasped him with such a vice-like grip that he could hardly breathe. When he tried to grapple with this singular ghost, his hands met just thin air. Having toppled its opponent over, the Fighting Ghost of Tondu glided off with a hollow laugh.

'A Ghostly Reign of Terror in Glamorganshire' exclaimed the headline of the *South Wales Echo*. Village ghosts were not unknown in this part of Wales, but they used to be timid and unadventurous, behaving with becoming *decorum* and keeping a safe distance from human beings. Although this novel spectre was draped in white, the proper attire for any self-respecting ghost, and made use of the equally orthodox outcry 'Boo!', it seemed much more combative, putting 12 strong men to flight, and then successfully wrestling another. A servant girl had recently seen the Fighting Ghost stalking the ruins of the abandoned colliery, uttering dismal groans and waving its arms about. Women and children were kept indoors after nightfall, and bands of stalwart men, armed with bludgeons and pitchforks, patrolled the country roads .

It would seem that the short career of the Fighting Ghost of Tondu ended in late September 1904, after it had been immortalised in the *Illustrated Police News* and other publications. Its origin is likely to have been the same as those of other 'suburban' or 'village' ghosts: ignoring the sad fate of the Hammersmith Ghost of 1814, who was shot dead by an armed ghost-hunter, some prankster amused himself by dressing up as a ghost and frightening timid and superstitious people in the neighbourhood. Although the annals of the *IPN* provide several instances of 'suburban ghosts' being caught, beaten up, or mauled by fierce dogs, the Fighting Ghost of Tondu seems to have been spared such indignities; there is no mention of its activities after September 1904.

Sources: *Daily Mirror* 9 Sept 1904 3; *IPN* 17 Sept 1904; Paul Sieveking, *Man Bites Man* (London, 1980), p97.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON

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NO CAUSE FOR ALARM...

IF WE FLY INTO ONE OF YOUR WINDOWS THEN THAT MEANS DEATH TOO....

OW! MY BEAK! WHO PUT THAT THERE?

IF WE EVEN PECK ON YOUR WINDOW YOU THINK WE MEAN DEATH!

PECK PECK PECK

IT'S NOT REALLY FAIR...

GO AWAY! PUSH OFF! I'M NOT REALLY DYING!

HMPH! SORRY, I'M SURE!

WE ONLY WANT TO HAVE A WARM AT THE FIRE... MAYBE A BIT OF CAKE AND A SMALL SHERRY...

BUT OH, NO! IT'S DEATH ALL ROUND IN YOUR MINDS! AND IT'S ALL RUBBISH!

BUT THERE'S ONE BIRD SUPERSTITION THAT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE!

THAT'S THE ONE ABOUT THE TINY BLUE FLOWER CALLED SPEEDWELL!

IF YOU PICK SPEEDWELL, BIRDS WILL COME IN THE NIGHT AND PECK YOUR EYES OUT...

AND IT'S NO GOOD CLOSING THE WINDOW- BIRDS WILL SMASH THE GLASS TO GET AT YOUR EYES!

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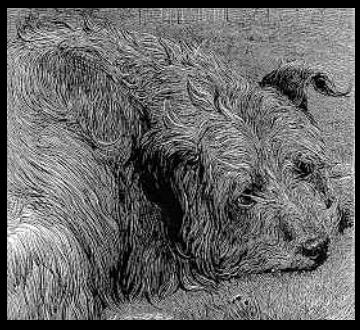

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HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

JANUARY 1973

A "dense" cloud of "soot" descended on several parts of Kent, blanketing areas with grains "the size of a large pinhead". Dartford, Bexley and North Cray were particularly affected. The smut was thought to have come from a factory chimney but no culprit was ever identified. **FT3:9-10**

JANUARY 1983

Australia's newly elected prime minister honoured his pre-election pledge and cancelled the construction of the Gordon River dam in Tasmania. The area to be flooded, in the southwest of the island, turned out to be home to at least 29 "special" plant species and at least 1,000 types of invertebrate ground-dwellers new to science. Botanist and ecology-spokesman David Bellamy – who had been briefly jailed for his part in the original protests when work started – endeared himself to cryptozoologists everywhere by pointing out that the region was one of the last known habitats of the Thylacine (or Tasmanian Tiger) which was officially declared extinct in 1986, just over 50 years after the last known capture of a living specimen in the wild. If any had survived into the present, argued Bellamy, the Gordon River might well be their last refuge. **FT39:16**

JANUARY 1993

One of my favourite categories is people stuck in chimneys. As a child, I remember wondering how a fat Santa could negotiate such a narrow soot-lined passage and pop out in a living-room grate without a smudge on his robe, the envy of any burglar. Imagine the astonishment of a couple in Oceanside, California, when, in the early hours of the 4th, they were woken to muffled cries from inside their chimney. On entering their living room, downstairs, they saw the blackened shape of Frank Morales dangling upside down in the fireplace. They called police and firemen and took souvenir photos before the authorities arrived. The wedged intruder told an improbable tale of "diving" into the chimney "to escape pursuit" and deciding to steal the piano. Much hilarity ensued before Morales was dislodged and led away. **FT72:5**

JANUARY 2003

We have, a surprising number of times, reported on large-scale social panics about one or more supernatural or phantom attackers; India, Malaysia and Ceylon spring to mind as suffering recent outbreaks. A lesser-known one took place in Malawi, beginning in December 2002 but continuing into this New Year. In the midst of a prolonged drought, a rumour sprang up that President Muluzi's government was colluding with vampires to collect human blood to exchange for food from the international aid agencies. Inevitably, impromptu mobs attacked foreigners as soon as panic was triggered. Muluzi blamed the unrest upon his political opponents, denying that his government "went about sucking the blood of its own people". Ironically, this was, metaphorically, probably exactly what the government was doing. The rumour spread regardless.

In December, one man was stoned to death and three Catholic priests were beaten up, all suspected of being vampires; and an aid depot, said to be a vampire HQ, was destroyed. This January, the governor of Blantyre was driven from his house and stoned by a large mob after a local chief accused him of harbouring vampires. Later news coverage was scarce, but I briefly heard of strangers still being attacked by wary villagers.

Of great interest to us are the popular beliefs that make up this mass panic and how they echo those in the other outbreaks mentioned. The 'vampires' were more like a cross between MIBs and the Mad Gasser than the urbane European kind, described as wearing dark clothing. They disable their victims with sleeping gas. They do not bite but use syringes to take blood, and their victims sicken and die. They are said to have magical powers and a fondness for graveyards.

In Chiradzulu village, 12 miles (19km) north of Blantyre, a Reuters reporter questioned a young man and his friends who, while on patrol, believed they had chased vampires. They had never heard of Dracula and scorned the idea of anyone drinking blood in this age of widespread AIDS. Like many others, they easily accepted the existence of these 'vampires' but were divided over whether they were humans with magical powers or some kind of spirits. The reporter was told by different witnesses of smelling the acrid 'sleeping gas', and of seeing suspicious syringes. One woman said she saw her attacker vanish into thin air.

It is worth noting here that similar vampire scares took place in Malawi in the 1970s and more recently in July 2009. **FT169:20**

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